

Flustered's Treasure Chest of Abandoned Fics

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Additional Tags:	Dark Sleepy Bois Inc , Platonic Possessive Sleepy Bois Inc , Kidnapping , Alternate Universe - Vampire , Forced Feeding , listen it's genuine dark in this fic so you are warned , no beta we die like men , Dark , Torture of a minor , Starvation , Fae TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Alternate Universe - Fae , Evil Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , Cat Shifter TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Alternate Universe - Superheroes/Superpowers , Child Abuse , Witches , Alternate Universe - Magic , Alternate Universe - Modern with Magic , TommyInnit Has an Eating Disorder (Video Blogging RPF) , Alternate Universe - Origins SMP Setting , Rabbit Hybrid Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Phantom Wilbur Soot , Elytrian Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Blood God Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Horror , Non-Consensual Body Modification , Alternate Universe - Harry Potter Setting , Goddess of Death Kristin Rosales Watson , Hermitcraft Season 7 , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) on Hermitcraft Server , i will not tag all of the hermits that i used in this au , i am not going to clog up the hc tags lmao , Inspired by Avatar: The Last Airbender
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Flustered's Treasure Chest of Abandoned Fics

by [Flustered](#)

Summary

A scrap bin of ideas and fics that I have decided to no longer pursue. Unedited and having many mental meltdowns in the middle of it. You'll see the notes and tears of a writer.

There totally isn't a box over your head when you click on this. Ignore the stick that is holding it up. And the string that goes into a shady bush. I'm not there. Nope. That's... somebody else. Yep. Also if you were trapped into making au's of my abandoned works that is totally a coincidence.

Vampire au, Fae au, Kitty Au, Familiar Au, DSMP/OSMP Au, Evil Step Dad Techno Au, Another Vampire Au, ATLA Au, HP Au, Hermitcraft Au

Notes

This was written roughly around Jan 2022.

WARNINGS:

forced feeding. food issues. kidnapping. vampire things. they bite people. so. there is that.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Vampire au 1 because Dew writes too good

- Tommy was raised by the hunter organization. After Tommy was taken as a baby, the vampires outted themselves to humanity and basically started their own government with the other supernatural creatures. Guess why?? Phil. He couldn't stand hunters being praised as heroes when they *killed his newborn baby*

-Spoiler: Tommy is not killed as a newborn baby

-Tommy is a natural born vampire, so he is actually growing up. Dream told him he was turned as a baby, but turned vampires never age. He's about 9-10 in this fic. Roughly a decade to a year of growth until he hits puberty. Then it slows down.

- Hunters are considered Nazis of their time, because surprise!!! There are a lot of people who are not human. (It's that one joke where everybody is pretending to be human when nobody is actually human)

- Dream also took Tommy bc maybe George was turned?? And a natural born vampires blood gave turned vampires immunity for a short period of time.

- Dream was killed decades ago when SBI raided the hunter grounds. George is whatever. Tommy escaped and is living on the streets since. It has been roughly seventy years since Tommy left. He is doing perfectly fine on his own (spoiler: no he isn't).

-Tommy can still feel SBI even though they can't. So he can mentally feel them hunting him.

Tommy *hates* coffins.

He hates them with a burning passion. Loathes the silky interior, the little pillow that goes under his head, and the fact that its a fucking box. It's position was either vertical or horizontal, and Tommy would prefer to spend the night standing in one rather than laying down. The nightmare of being *buried alive* always felt more real when he was in the coffin laying on the shitty cushion.

"It's where monsters get to rest," Dream told him, when Tommy was younger. And he reached out and booped Tommy on the nose, *"because that's what you are, Toms. A monster."*

The first thing Tommy did after the Fall of the Hunters, was to burn that shitty box before escaping. But sometimes, like now, Tommy will wake up sweaty with his breath catching in his throat, absolutely *convinced* that he was in a coffin again.

Although Tommy had to admit, the coffin was at least lined with cloth and shitty stuffing that made it soft. What was that saying again? You never know how much you'll miss something

until it's gone? Well, Tommy could say without a doubt that he misses how a coffin doesn't drip on him, or the metal bars that pressed into his sides.

Or the fact that some wannabe cult-like group was having a hissy fit in front of Tommy, because *apparently* they don't know what Tommy was.

The bounty hunter, super illegal and Tommy was going to fucking report him to the police after this, said that Tommy was fae. The slightly pointy ears and the forever youthful appearance that only slowly aged as decades passed proved to be true. The cultists bought Tommy for a hefty amount of money, and Tommy stared at them and memorised their faces because *fuck them* he was going to report these sickos to the police as well.

Of course, the cultists were not *nice*. Heaven forbid, a cult was good to the people that they stuck into silver lined cages. Once they noticed that Tommy wasn't shrieking and melting like the witch from the wizard of oz, they turned on each other.

“-I told you we should have double checked-”

“-Punz would have double charged us if we damaged the goods before-”

“-I don't give two flying fucks about damaging the goods-”

Gee thanks, Tommy leaned up back against the bars. Crossing his arms, and giving the cultists a deadpan look. *The goods* had ears. And Tommy was unimpressed. But these guys were sickos. Fae were neutral, mischievous, and annoyingly horrible once you got on their bad side. And they were just talking about casually pressing them up against silver just to prove that they were fae.

“-I mean, look at him! He isn't human!” One man shouted.

Tommy *did his best, thank you*. It wasn't too terribly difficult to disguise himself as normal. But Punz, (thank you random cultist for giving the name of the hunter Tommy *will* be sharing that to the authorities) had been able to pry every bit of disguise off of Tommy to showcase him. Even so, Tommy could play himself off as a hybrid, rather than something supernatural. How Punz had known that Tommy was something different was either sheer luck, or the guy didn't know and had wanted to make a quick buck.

Slightly pointed ears, fingernails that were a bit too sharp, and well... Tommy's eyes were a bit... cat like? Besides that, he could pass himself off as a normal human. Throw on a pair of sunglasses, which helped Tommy's eyes from watering in the sunlight, and he was perfectly normal.

Thankfully, the one last bit of protection Punz didn't steal away was Tommy's bracelet. Honestly, if the cultists had noticed it sooner they would have known it was silver. It was thick and clunky, but it had stayed on Tommy's wrist as long as he could recall.

“-should we just drain it of it's blood, and sell it's parts off?” One cultist asked, “we could get *some* money back.”

“Nobody would buy some unknown bits and pieces of it.” The other retorted. “We need to know what it is first.”

“Well,” Tommy looked up to see the cultists staring at him, “why don’t we ask it? We can do this the easy way... or the hard way. You choose, freak.”

Lovely.

The hard way was spitting foul language and watching as cultists flipped through an *encyclopedia* while they tried to figure out what Tommy was. They gave up with threats long ago. And once they brandished a knife at him- and the cut was healed within seconds, they went with the alternate route.

Studying.

What a bunch of fucking weeb.

“He isn’t recoiling from holy water.” One guy was flicking water onto Tommy. “So you can cross off anything unholy.”

“Damn, demon parts sell off so fast.” A lady cursed.

“What a bunch of idiots,” Tommy said, crossing his arms. “I can’t believe I’m here right now. I have things to do. Like drugs, or women. You’re a bunch of pussies.”

A guy snorted, “you’re like, twelve.”

Tommy was *not*. He was a fucking *adult*. Even though he grew up very, very slowly he was over a *whole century old*. He may look like a preteen kid, but he was an old man at heart already. “I’m not a kid!” He hissed.

“Oh, look that up. Maybe he’s part angel. One of those cherub things.” The girl snapped her fingers.

Tommy was going to rip her a new one when the man standing closest to the cage reached in and grabbed Tommy by the wrist, pulling him up. “Hey!”

“What’s this you got here?” The guy twisted Tommy’s wrist uncomfortably. The silver bracelet glinted dully in the light. “Is this some kind of illusion magic?”

“Don’t you dare touch it!” Tommy snarled at him, his voice inhuman and low. A growl deep in his throat. But the guy didn’t heed his warning, instead grabbing at the metal and trying to pry it off. Tommy struggled, thrashing and trying to get his other hand up to claw at the guy, but the angle was weird and Tommy wasn’t fast enough.

The bracelet slid off.

“You have to promise me,” Dream said, one day holding Tommy’s wrist with the clunky bracelet on it, “that you will not take this off. Ever.”

“But-” Tommy sniffled, wiping the tears from his eyes. His wrist barely caught the bracelet from falling off, it was just so big and sometimes it hurt. Making his skin sting and ache.

“No buts.” Dream said firmly, and then his voice got soft again. “This bracelet is the only thing that is keeping you from being a real monster, Tommy. Is that what you want to be?”

Tommy shook his head, the toddler staring up at the masked hunter. “No, I don’t wanna be a monster.”

“Then you keep it on. The bad people, you know, the ones that turned you into a monster, they can find you if it’s taken off.” Dream said.

Tommy shuddered at the very thought, “no! I don’t wanna be found!”

Dream poked Tommy on his forehead, “they can. They can read your mind. And they can find out where you are and kill you.”

Tommy’s eyes watered up again, “how can they read my mind?” His bottom lip trembled.

“That monster inside of you will tell them everything. It’s connected with them, you know? So never, ever take it off. Do you understand me?” Tommy nodded, clutching the silver tight against his chest.

“I promise, Dream. I won’t.”

Tommy took the bracelet off exactly one other time in his life. And it resulted in everybody fucking *dying*- so excuse him for the gasp and full body shudder as he felt it gone. The cultist held his wrist, peering down at him.

“Anything different?” The lady asked, breaking the silence.

“Nada.” The guy said, and he released Tommy who slumped down into the cage. “Maybe it’s-”

If Tommy’s heart could beat, it would be thumping in his chest. He had wondered once, when he was still a child, what it felt like to have something *moving* within his chest. The concept was so strange, for foreign. But after spending decades in the midst of humanity, Tommy wished he had one. The panic that seeped into his stomach wasn’t enough, the fear that shocked his system, could not drown out the faint *whispers*.

It was barely there. Like a drop of ink landing in a pitcher of clear water, it slowly reached its tendrils out to Tommy. Oozing its way into his head, the connection that had been muted for so long now suddenly grew.

They... they were unaware. Tommy closed his eyes and curled up into a ball, ignoring the cold silver that pressed up against his side, focusing only on the mental connection. He was

so sensitive to it already. Wherein he could feel the others on the other end not noticing Tommy's quiet arrival.

It wouldn't last long.

"Maybe it's a mer." One of the cultists said, cutting into Tommy's thoughts.

The lady finally threw the book down and sighed, "lets just cut it up and be done with it." She said irritably.

"I mean, I guess we could now." The guy reached in and poked at Tommy, making him flinch at the touch.

The sudden spike of fear was his downfall.

A whisper *curiosity-confusion-are-you-okay* pulsed through the bond.

No-it's-not-me-concern

I'm-fine-I'm-good-who-is-it?

The connection was more akin to feelings, but Tommy could sense the questions and messages in the bond. It was inhuman, and it made Tommy feel raw at the sensations.

The tendrils of the connection were thin and fragile, but the sense of *relatization-wonder-excitement-finally-he's-here* was as strong as the knife that suddenly buried itself into Tommy's leg.

Pain shot through the bond, and the sudden clamor made Tommy's world spin. But it was enough for Tommy to break out of his stupor. It was time to stop being a damsel in distress, Tommy had to take matters into his own hands.

His head whipped up, his eyes narrowed into slits at the cultist who still held the knife in hand. A flash, a blur of movement, and suddenly the man's arm was *gone*.

Family-family-baby-where-are-you

Anger-how-are-you-hurt

Desperation-longing-relief-child-my-child-where-are-you

Tommy ignored them. The bracelet was his only protection. It was the only thing that kept him *human*. And these fools took it.

Tommy ripped the cage open, as his fangs dropped down. The humans began to scream.

Later, when he stumbles out of the murder basement, dripping with blood and flesh, feeling fuller than he had in a long, long time. He didn't really *need* blood. He had long since passed the stage of ignoring the hunger that twisted him up like a pretzel.

Something was wrong. It made him feel off kilter. Like a part of him was missing, and he was walking at an angle to compensate for the loss. The bracelet was heavy on his wrist, red smears from where his fingers had gripped it and pulled it back on.

The connection that had been screaming at him (*where-are-you-please-desperation-please-love-where-are-you*) cut off. He had never felt it so strong before. Nearly drowning his thoughts out, as he gutted the woman.

But-

But Tommy could still *feel* it.

It was faint. Like a breeze on a sweltering hot day. Brushing up against his mind before disappearing again. And then caressing him when he least expected it.

anger-anger-loss-he's-gone-again

agony-mourning-we-will-find-him-I-promise

sadness-loss-dissatisfaction-yes-we-will

“911 what is your emergency?” A woman replied, a professional and neat.

“Um hello?” The voice of a young boy crackled through the speakers. “I uh, I think I’m in trouble.”

“What is wrong?”

“I was- I was walking home? And this guy jumped out of nowhere and he was going to kidnap me!” The kid was talking fast, his voice wavering. “He said that I was a supernatural creature and- and that he was going to sell me.”

“Is he nearby?” The woman on the line remained calm.

“No. No, I ran away. But I caught his name, he said it was Punz.”

“Where are you now?”

“I- I don’t know. I think I’m safe for now.”

“Can you tell me anything about your surroundings? Any buildings or-”

“No- no I’m good. You just gotta stop this guy from grabbing other kids, please.” The recording had a moment of static, “thank you for helping.”

And then the line cut.

Technoblade rose up from where he was leaning onto the table, his eyes still on the computer that played the recording. “Anything else?” His voice rumbled, but it was clear that his

thoughts were still far away.

“We were able to ping the location a few blocks away from the house. The phone in question was stolen, reported missing a few hours after the call was made.” Lining the walls, in typical police fashion, were pictures of the crime. Four people gutted and spread across the walls and floor of a basement. If it wasn’t for the fact that there was a cage, a familiar sight that Techno was able to catch from the bond, he wouldn’t have cared about this particular investigation.

They had only been able to feel Theseus for a fleeting moment. A few images passing through the unsteady bond. But it was enough for Techno. That, and the government as a whole worked for him.

“Time frame?”

“Three days, give or take.” Sam said, their leading consultant and head detective said. “We were able to bring up similar reports of a hunter called Punz, but it looks like he ran out of town before we were able to catch him.”

“I want every able person on the lookout for him,” Techno said. Hunters were the thing of the past, these days. But they were like cockroaches. Always underfoot and appearing out of nowhere, breeding like rabbits. Normally, Techno would be the one to take care of the issue. But he had someone else he needed to find.

The last member of their coven.

Stolen, years ago when Theseus was still swaddled in blankets. They had thought that Theseus was killed, all those years ago. The tentative connection of their coven bond, the sleepy simple mind of a baby that only wanted food, sleep, and to fart, had cut suddenly. When they raced home, the manor was on fire and all of their staff were dead. Theseus was presumed dead, and all of the vampire kind mourned the loss of a naturally born child.

It had been a horrible night. One that was burned into Techno’s head. He would still consider it to be one of the worst days of his existence, save for the fact that Theseus was *alive*.

- tommy's bracelet gets damaged and he can sense SBI now but they still can't sense him.

THE YOINK:

Tommy was a master at disappearing. He might look like a child, even act like one on a rare day, but he was good at hiding and running into a crowd.

Maybe it was all of the things that he learned while in the monastery where he grew up with Hunters. Or perhaps it was something he was naturally good at.

He had thought that after leaving the burning building behind that living with humanity would be difficult. Turns out living with Hunters for the first seventy years of his life was harder than being a homeless kid- so fuck you Dream.

The first thing Tommy did was find a woman. Women are queens, after all, and he respects them *so much*. They are less likely to kill or hurt him, and they always seemed so kind when a lil kid trots up to them.

"Hello," Tommy peered up at a woman in a parking lot.

"Oh, Hi there." The woman said sweetly, glancing around. "Where is your family kiddo?"

Tommy caught her gaze, his sunglasses gone and in a murder basement. His blue cat-like eyes dilating. He could see her start to waver, slowly, and then she stared at him blankly. His eye contact seemed to put humans in a trance- and Dream was always quick to pound it into Tommy's head to never make direct eye contact with him again.

"Please take me with you," Tommy says, and the woman slowly nodded.

And that was the first step he took.

It was not the last.

The city was vast. But it wasn't enough. The woman took him to a park, and Tommy hitched another ride with somebody else after that.

A few hundred miles, two bus trips where Tommy snuck on and stared the bus driver down to forget that he didn't pay- Tommy was four states away and in a bustling city. He was in a hotel room, his head was pounding.

The fuckers were sending their damned feelings or shit through the bond.

Sometimes it was quiet.

Other times, Tommy was in hell. No way to stop the sensations flooding in his head.

A stray image would flash through his head. A guitar, its last note still hanging in the air. Or a sparkling glass, with a deep red liquid in it, swirling gently.

There were three of them. Tommy could kind of pinpoint who was who, but when all of their emotions were heightened and bleeding through the connection they blended together.

found-found-trail came from the stoic one. Their emotions were neutral most of the time, except when it would surge and Tommy could feel the bloodlust.

Curiosity-excitement-do-you-mean-what-I-think-you-mean?

That guy had the most emotions out of all of them. Fucking dipping up and down like a roller-coaster. It made Tommy's head hurt when one second he was happy and the next he was seething with anger.

anticipation-excitement-anxious-please-tell-us

This one had the most restraint. But he was fucking sad and scared all the time. A real worrywart. Tommy didnt mind him that much, but still, he didnt like suddenly crying because he woke up feeling *lost-alone-where-is-he-is-he-safe-I-miss-him-I-am-so-worried*

The stoic one sent an image that sent Tommy's world tumbling to the ground. It was of *him* . The surroundings were familiar- the parking lot he had been in a few days ago. It was from a security camera, angled up high so all you could see was Tommy's golden hair and the blood staining his jeans. Fresh out of the murder basement.

Fuck.

The crescendo of emotions hit Tommy like a tidal wave as all three clamored to project their feelings. *Excitement-baby-YES-found-him-HUNT-HIM-DOWN*.

Tommy evaded cameras after that. Slumping into the car seats as far as he could in the hopes that traffic cameras wouldnt pick him up.

Four days later, an image of him in the back of a sedan was projected into the bond.

Tommy stopped making humans take him places.

The headache was constant. The bond was aching- an almost physical pain that pushed Tommys own thoughts out of his own head, replacing them with their emotions.

It hurt.

Assholes.

The good thing was that his silver bracelet was stopping Tommy from being felt by them now. He wouldn't know what to do if they could get into his mind.

Tommy stopped by a bus full of tourists, joining them even as the elderly pinched his cheeks and gave him candy to eat. He liked them, and felt a bit sorry that he had to go. One of them gave them cash, unprompted, and said that Tommy was like a grandson to them.

Three days after that, Tommy saw a flash of the sweet grandma nattering about the cute blonde boy in the connection.

They were *still* following him .

Double fuck.

Tommy needed to sleep. But he stopped being able to have a full night when every moment the found something, the bond would roar open and Tommy would be startled awake as Stoic Guy found a bag that Tommy had discarded.

Why couldn't they leave him alone? Didnt they have anything else to do?

Sad Guy was the worst. Sending thoughts constantly. *Concern-any-updates?*

No-focused-busy.

Tommy didn't stay in hotels after he saw Stoic Guy pick up a pillow that Tommy used and *smell it*.

What was wrong with the guy??

Tommy walked into a thrift store, and walked out with a new set of clothes and a hat firmly stuck onto his head.

One day.

It took Stoic Guy *one fucking day* to walk into the same store and, apparently with his fucking nose, picked out the clothes on the racks that Tommy had discarded.

They were getting closer.

And Tommy was running out of ideas.

Next gut instinct is to fucking fly. Tommy almost headed towards an airport, ready to throw himself onto the nearest family and pretend to be one of their kids to get onto a plane, to go literally anywhere. It was the fastest mode of transportation, right?

But Tommy had a feeling that they would be looking for that. The cameras that picked him up must've had someone looking specifically for him. And, well. The airport is also just chuck full of thousands of them. Not to mention how many people he would have to stare in the eyes with to force him through security.

Tommy tucked himself into that little compartment with all of the suitcases on a bus instead. If nobody saw him, then they wouldn't find him, right?

Wrong.

It was like trying to play a game of darts, except the darts were gone, the board was the enemy, and every time Tommy missed the board got closer and threatened to stick him with the darts.

Stoic guy was amused. Every clue he picked up, sending across to the others, was filled with both frustration and impressed feelings. The guy loved chasing Tommy around, like an absolute creep! And Tommy was tired. He hadn't really been able to eat in a while, the last person he bit, Stoic guy had interviewed and Tommy wasn't too keen on it happening again.

Tommy had two options. Keep going, until he eventually messes up and the guy catches him and- well. Wait, do vampires eat their young? Tommy doesn't know, but honestly it wouldn't

surprise him if they did. Dream always told Tommy the destruction that vampires left behind. The countless dead. The town burning to the ground. He would rather not go anywhere near them, thank you. Tommy was a good vampire. The kind that didn't take more than he needed to.

And the second option was... well. It was to make the guy *stop following him* . Tommy could just... stop running and find the guy and *make* him stop.

Tommy tried the first option.

So now it is time to do the second.

There were a few things that Tommy knew about what Stoic Guy-

He's really smart

And he can *smell* Tommy. Like. That was just crazy.

But then again, this was a full adult vampire and they tend to do wild shit. Five decades ago some vamp lit themselves on fire and was *fine* and casually walked around until his clothes burned off. So Tommy had to be *smart* about this.

New York City was a place that was very stinky, smelly, and full of humans. And it wasn't too far away from Tommy, so it only took a few hours for him to arrive in the heart of the bustling city. The next stop was to find a mall. With a bottle of obnoxiously smelly soap and his disguise from some cosplay store, Tommy broke into a gym and showered. Twice.

And then he waited.

It was almost distressingly sad to see it only took *five* hours. *Five* . Tommy thought he still might have a full to a half of a day head start on the guy. But figuring how he kept showing up to places, faster and faster, that he would be there sooner than expected. But only five fucking hours??

Tommy would have never even made it on the plane.

He sat behind a fake bush in the open air mall. A skating rink was set up in the middle, and a hundred or so people slowly skated around while peddlers and homeless people sat around talking and meandering. It was a normal scene, humans living their lives, and Tommy saw the pink haired bastard and knew instinctually it was him.

He lowered himself into the bush a little bit further, keeping his eyes locked on the other vampire.

Stoic was on the phone, and if it wasn't for the fact that he had pink hair and wore sunglasses, he looked pretty normal. But it was the way that he was prowling around, his gate smooth and inhuman, and the fact that he would stop and sniff at the air every so often- it betrayed his disguise.

Nobody else here noticed.

Tommy sank lower in the plastic bush, wondering how the fuck he was going to scare this guy off his trail.

Should he just- bite him? No, the other guy was a vampire too. Biting sucked but it was easily healed.

What about staring him in the eye and telling him to go away. That might work, but that also meant getting closer to the Neanderthal.

What about-

Tommy was trying to come up with another idea when the pink haired guy stiffened. And faster than humans could perceive, Stoic Guy turned and faced Tommy's hiding spot.

Tommy ducked. Curling up behind the pot, eyes wide with shock. Shit.

The guy was *fast* .

How much blood did this fucker eat? You- you had to eat like, almost *every day* to get that enhanced. Okay that changed things- not only is Tommy going up against another vampire, but a juiced up one that could probably lift a bus over his head.

Screw plan B. Tommy was going back to plan A now. He was getting far, far away from this shitty guy and-

His ears caught the sound of near silent footsteps.

Nearly silent. But Tommy was still a bit of a vampire. And he could still hear things fine.

What- what should he do?

He can't run. The guy would see him, but if he stayed here he was a sitting duck! Tommy's instincts said not to move, but fuck that shit! Tommy wasn't going to give up without a fight!

Popping up from the bush, ready to fucking run like Usain Bolt, Tommy's blue eyes met the shocked stare of the other vampire.

And suddenly Tommy couldn't run anymore. Trapped in a staring contest between him and the other guy.

'He has red eyes, ' Tommy thought, able to see the color past the dark lens of the sunglasses.

And then-

An image flashed through the bond. Of a straggly thin kid, with dark clothes on and a fake leaf caught in his blonde hair, with wide blue terrified filled eyes.

The connection exploded with emotion.

YOU-FOUND-HIM

ELATION-RELIEF-WHERE-ARE-YOU-VICTORY

LOVE-GRIEF-WORRY-HE-IS-SO-SKINNY-LOOK-AT-HIM

Tommy stumbled back, his hands flying up to hold at his head. It was too much! It hurt!

Hands caught at his shoulders, holding him and tugging him into the chest of the vampire. "I found you," the vampire whispered reverently, "I finally *found* you, Theseus."

The name was what shocked Tommy into his senses. The ringing bell of the connection still clamored for his attention. But- but the name Theseus was-

"You've been very bad today, haven't you, Theseus." Dream crooned in that sweet voice that could hide so many lies. "I heard you backtalked to Sapnap."

"I'm- I'm sorry!" Tommy tried to curl away from the hand that descended onto him. "I didn't mean to. I'm sorry."

"Sapnap said he was almost afraid for his life, Theseus. That isn't what I raised you to be. Do you want to be a monster?"

"No!" Tommy cried out, "I don't- I'm sorry Dream. I'm so sorry. Please. Don't- please."

"Maybe think of this next time, Theseus." Dream said, brushing one hand against Tommy's cheek softly, before gripping it harder. "Learn from your mistakes."

Theseus was the name Dream called Tommy when he broke a rule. When Tommy fucked up so badly that he was punished. Tommy thought that stupid name was behind him, but this fucking vampire-

"HELP!" Tommy yelled at the top of his voice, trying to pull away from the pink haired man's ironclad grip. *"HELP HE'S TRYING TO KIDNAP ME!! STRANGER DANGER!"*

Humans were very protective of their young. Tommy knew from experience. He was asked dozens of times a day if he knew where his family was, or if he was lost. It was frustrating, to say the least. He was a big man! An adult! So being talked to like a kid was demeaning.

But it didn't mean that Tommy wouldn't abuse this power, no no. He would absolutely do it in a heartbeat.

It was like the whole mall stopped to stare at the interaction. Even the ice skaters stopped moving, craning their necks with narrowed eyes to stare at the man holding what looked like to be a nine-year-old kid.

"Hey, get your hands off him!" A man nearby gestured rudely at the vampire.

"I'm not- I-" The guy stuttered, and to Tommy's surprise, he actually let go.

Tommy stumbled back a few feet, and turned on the waterworks. Bursting into tears, he grabbed onto the nearest human and blubbered. "He grabbed me! And said I needed to come

with him!"

The woman curled around Tommy protectively, "you should be ashamed of yourself!" She spat at the vampire.

The pink haired guy looked like he was a deer in headlights.

"I am not a stranger!" The vampire said, protesting, "I'm his brother."

"Oh yeah, I'm not falling for that trick," another guy said, spitting onto the ground. "Prove it!"

A crowd was forming. A giant ring, and at the center was the Stoic Guy, who was flushing as almost as pink as his hair.

Their eyes met, and Tommy stuck out his tongue and gave a little smirk. Fucker. And then Tommy turned his head into the woman's jacket just as the guy's jaw dropped.

"You little-"

"Woah woah woah!" A cop shoved his way into the crowd. "You back up from the kid, sir."

"I am not lying. He is my brother."

Tommy was pulled into the safe arms of the crowd. The woman holding him dearly. And he almost felt bad as he caught her eye and silently drew her into his power. She blinked hazily, and it was enough for Tommy to slip from her grip and push himself through the crowd. He popped out of the other side of the wall of people, and *ran*.

There was a low growl behind Tommy, he had barely made it around the corner. He was free! Right? Tommy glanced behind him to double check, and yep! Nobody was following him! He had tricked the vampire and now-

Tommy ran head first into a firm chest, steel arms wrapping around him tightly.

What the fu-

"That was clever, I'll have to admit." Said the vampire, staring down at Tommy with a dangerous look in his eyes. Tommy's heart dropped to his stomach. "But you'll have to do worse to ditch me."

Tommy sucked in another breath, and maybe this time his cry for help would be for real. But the vampire slapped a hand over his mouth, and suddenly the world turned into a blur of colors. Too fast for Tommy to comprehend. It made his already dizzy head hurt, and fuck-black spots were starting to spread across his vision.

It was just too fast. Was the guy running at the speed of light or some shit? Tommy couldn't even think how somebody could move so fast- and yet this vampire was doing it.

Tommy slumped in the arms, a soft whimper falling from his throat. And the world stopped spinning uncontrollably.

"Sorry," the guy said, his voice so deep it vibrated through Tommy. "I forgot how overwhelming it can be for nestlings."

Tommy bit him.

The hand was still over his mouth. And all he had to do was drop his fangs. It was painfully easy. His teeth ached, like they always did, but it was satisfying to see the vampire's eyes widened and pull his hand away.

Or-

Wait no.

The guy didn't move his hand. It was still stuck to Tommy's face, his fangs buried into his palm, and he just stared down at Tommy, his eyes dilating.

His oozy stinky blood got into Tommy's mouth. It was... okay. For blood. Not the greatest. Or the tastiest. It was still the blood of a scummy vampire that hunted Tommy across the country. Tommy reflexively swallowed.

The guy looked like he was on the edge of tears.

Not the kind that was 'oh no, I'm in pain and I don't want to die' tears that humans had when Tommy would bite them.

It was the kind of 'I'm so touched' kind of tears. Tommy grunted his annoyance, swallowing another mouthful of the blood accidentally.

"It's okay, Theseus." The guy shifted around, and his thumb gently rubbed across Tommy's jaw. "Have as much as you want, kiddo. I won't mind."

The fuck is he on about?

Tommy retracted his fangs with a grimace, and a small trail of blood leaked from the corner of his mouth. The thumb reached up and swiped it away, leaving a stick trail. "Fuck off!" Tommy snarled, giving the vampire a glare.

The guy seemed a bit disappointed that Tommy was done so quickly, but he squared his shoulders and opened a car door. Red eyes stared down at Tommy. And after a few seconds, the act of blinking seemed heavy and hard. "Why don't you go to sleep, Theseus."

"No." Tommy protested faintly, but he swayed. Unable to look away.

"Come on, kiddo. Go to sleep. And when you wake up, you'll be home."

Tommy struggled to open his eyes, but he did it. "I don't- I don't gotta home though." He sounded lost, as he finally closed his eyes for the last time.

"Yes, Theseus, yes you do." The vampire muttered back into Tommy's hair. "We've been waiting for you for a long time now. It's taken us a while to find you."

AFTERMATH OF YOINK:

Tommy woke up to the sun shining on his face. His body felt so heavy, and he was almost certain that if the sun hadn't decided to personally attack him, he could have stayed asleep for longer.

His body felt weak, and he slapped a hand over his face to wake myself up faster. Groaning, Tommy shifted slightly- and that was when his brain caught up to him that he was in a really soft bed. Tommy's eyes opened, the sun rays blinding him for a moment, before he could glance around where he was.

It wasn't the first time that Tommy woke up in a weird place. But it was the first time that he had ever been in a fancy ass room in the softest bed known to mankind. He tried to recall what had happened, but all that came up was a startling blank wall. He had... he was at a mall and then-

There was somebody bigger than him. Faster too- with red eyes and *fangs*.

Oh shit.

Tommy finally threw himself off of the bed, his feet thumping onto the carpet. He almost collapsed from that one action, his head spinning in circles and dark spots appearing in his vision. What-

There was a shuffle near the doorway. The sound of footsteps that were fast approaching. Well, Tommy wasn't going to stay here to find out! He let himself fall, pulling up the blankets that covered the edge of the bed, and crawled his way underneath. Shuffling until his back hit the cool wall, as far as he could away from the assholes that kidnapped him off the street.

Fuckers.

It wasn't the first time it happened. Nor would it be the last. People saw a scrawny homeless kid and thought he was a prime target. Easy to take, and not a lot of people would miss him. Well, Tommy is a vampire. And he can be a mean bastard when he wants to be!

Although, how would he fight against other vampires? Tommy bet they were stronger than him anyways- what with the feeding on the blood of the innocent and virgins. Tommy was a good vampire, only taking when he absolutely had to. The others of his kind weren't as nice as he was.

The door opened, and Tommy didn't breathe. He didn't have to. He watched as the footsteps paused in the doorway, freezing.

Panic-panic-gone-hes-gone.

Surprise-what-where-is-he?

He-can't-have-gone-far-find-him.

Tommy repressed the shudder. Any kind of movement would give him away. Vamps had good hearing. It was a blessing that Tommy didn't have a heartbeat to give him away right now. The socked feet entered the room, moving over to a closet that Tommy hadn't had time to really look at to throw it open.

"Theseus?" A man called out, sliding the shirts and clothes around on the rack as if to find Tommy behind them. "Where are you? I promise, I won't hurt you. You're safe here." The feet thumped across the room to another doorway, opening it and stepping inside.

I-can't-find-him-where-are-you.

Nearby-I'm-coming.

I'm-almost-there.

"Theseus, darling?" The man walked back in, pausing to rattle the window. It was locked, of course it was locked. Bastards. Tommy would absolutely jump out of it given the chance. "Come on. You're making me scared."

There was the sound of more people now. Coming closer. Tommy wanted to curl up, but his flight or fight kicked in, and his body froze. "Wilbur," another man said, and this time his voice sounded familiar.

The faint memory of a large hand reaching down for him, pulling him out from his hiding spot- the words, "*I found you,*" rang through Tommy's head. That was the guy who stole Tommy off the streets.

Things... weren't actually looking too good now.

Still, Tommy just had to be patient. Eventually he could get out of here. It always happens. He just had to wait long enough.

"I looked in the closet, and the bathroom." The first man, Wilbur, said in a panicked tone. There was the sound of another door opening, and then snapping closed.

"It's okay," said a third man soothingly. "Tech, you go search the floor below. I'll go look around at the other rooms on this floor. And-"

Suddenly light hit Tommy's face again, as the blankets were pulled up. Blinking rapidly, Tommy could see a face. Warm yellow eyes, with curling brown hair that was mostly covered

in a beanie. The two gazed at each other, shocked. And then he grinned widely at Tommy, showing off two deadly fangs.

“Hello sweetheart,” Wilbur said sweetly, “what are you doing under there?”

Tommy hissed, letting his own fangs drop from his mouth. He was a danger here too! But instead of fearing Tommy like any sane person would do, Wilbur practically melted. “Oh my god, he has little baby fangs!” He cooed, and he reached an arm in towards Tommy.

Fast as lightning, Tommy reached out and slashed at Wilbur’s arm. Drawing blood. Wilbur wisely yanked his arm back, peering down at the gashes that Tommy made. Tommy growled, the sound making his whole body shake with the effort. If he was intimidating enough, these losers would leave him alone.

“Don’t antagonize him, mate.” A hand clasped Wilbur on the shoulder, just barely in view for Tommy to see. “Let him be for now. He needs a safe space.”

“But-”

“No buts. Theseus can stay there for now. Okay?”

The grumbly deep voice said, “I’m just glad I didn’t have to hunt him down. Especially with all of the places he could hide in this house. He’ll come out, eventually, Wilbur.”

Tommy wanted to scoff at that, like he’ll crawl out when there are those assholes around! No way!

If they weren’t going to pull him out then he was going to stay here forever. He had the high ground! Well, actually. He had the low ground! As long as he could claw at their ankles things would be fine.

Tommy wasn’t ever really alone. He could hear the fuckers! If they weren’t sitting in the room with him, trying to coax him out with dumb lies or talking down to him like he was a baby, then they were standing outside of the door.

-tommy does not come out on his own accord

-he stays under the bed for a few days

-techno spies the bracelet and gets it off

- they can feel his hunger

-phil uses magic purring to calm tommy and pull him from under the bed

FEEDING THE BOY:

His head was buzzing. The low croon knocked all sense out of him, and he was in a daze as he was picked up and placed in the lap of the older vampire. It almost didn't feel real. Slumping into the rumbling chest of the man, Tommy sluggishly blinked and tried to *focus* but it was impossible.

"There you go." The man swayed back and forth, rocking Tommy gently.

There was a buzzing in his brain. Tommy knew he should be fighting. Spitting at the man and trying to draw blood. But that noise dragged him down into an almost disassociating state. He tried to reach up to claw at the bastard, but instead his hand couldn't make the journey, falling to grip at the man's shirt instead. The man crooned sweetly at the action.

"I missed you too, my little one." He muttered, kissing the top of Tommy's head. "I missed you so much, you have no idea."

The door opened, and the two other fuckers walked in. The vampire in the yellow sweater, Wilbur, takes one look at Tommy's slumped form and practically skips over. "Oh you got him out from under the bed!"

Tommy barely could muster a weak growl at that, turning his face from the looming bastard, burying it into the shoulder of the man holding him. Wilbur melted, cooing over him. "He's so small, Phil!"

"Hey there," Phil, the guy holding him by using his jedi mind powers, "you can't fall asleep yet. You need to eat something."

Tommy was *not* going to fall asleep. He wasn't! Even though he felt very tired. He blinked slowly, and jerkily he shook his head. He wasn't that hungry either. The idea of eating wasn't very appealing at all.

"Oh, don't be like that sunshine," Wilbur said, with a pout. "You have to eat sometime. You've been under that bed for so long, I bet you're starving."

Tommy tried to wrestle with his thoughts, focusing on grounding himself. He was a bit spacy, but honestly Tommy wasn't hungry. He shook his head and pressed his face a bit harder into Phil. He didn't want to eat.

There was a sigh, and Phil moved. Pulling Tommy away from his chest to make eye contact. "Come on, Theseus. It isn't healthy to starve yourself. We can feel that you're hungry."

Right, the magical bullshit that allowed them to read his mind or whatever. Tommy scrunched his face up and tried to pull away. But Phil just made that croon again. Making Tommy pliable in his arms.

“Techno, could I borrow a knife?” Phil said, and oh wonderful- they were going to stab him. Tommy knew that they were wrong’uns! From the very start! It felt a bit unfair that they were drugging him up with their weird creepy noises, but Tommy had gone through worse!

Techno didn’t make a sound as he pulled a knife out of his boot. It glinted in the light, and he handed it, handle first, to Phil. Tommy flinched slightly as the knife got closer. Wilbur reached up, petting Tommy’s hair. “Shh, it’s okay. I know, it must be hard. I can’t imagine what kind of humans indoctrinated you into thinking that eating isn’t good. But I promise, it’ll be okay.”

Tommy didn’t give two shits about Wilbur’s promises. Or whatever made up scenario that Wilbur was under the impression that was Tommy’s life. He wasn’t *indoctrinated*. Tommy could eat whenever he wanted to. He just didn’t at this moment.

He expected the knife to cut him. Or maybe Phil would stab him. But instead, Tommy watched as Phil drew the dagger over his own wrist. A line of blood dripped down, and the scent of it was filling the air. It almost made Tommy feel sick- the cloying scent of the blood so close to his face.

Phil brought it closer, and Tommy scrunched his face up and shook his head again. No. He *didn’t want to eat*. Leaning away as far as he could from the flesh wound.

There was a pause, as all three vampires looked at Tommy with almost horror in their eyes. “This is worse than I thought,” Phil said, his voice trembling. “Come on. Don’t you want a little taste? Just a nibble?”

Tommy pressed his face into Phil’s shoulder again. Trying to hide from the overwhelming smell. And Wilbur’s breath hitched. “What did they do to you?” Wilbur said, anger lacing his voice. “How- how can you refuse when we *know* you’re starving?”

“Wilbur,” Techno cut in, his voice grumbling, “this isn’t the time for that.”

Gentle hands pried Tommy’s face from Phil’s shoulder. Wilbur pulled him away from the only barrier that protected Tommy from the stench. Phil made that crooning noise, and Tommy realized he made a high pitched sound of protest.

“Come on.” Wilbur said, stroking Tommy’s hair in a firm hold. “I know you want it. I promise you’ll be okay. We won’t hurt you.”

And then the wrist was pressed up closer to Tommy’s face, and he couldn’t help himself, he gagged. A soft retching noise, and he was able to pull up one hand and push the blood away from himself. Tommy didn’t see the shocked expressions of the other vampires above him.

“He might be too hungry to eat.” Techno said, crossing from where he was looming by the wall to kneel in front of Tommy. Taking his wrists in one hand, holding them firmly but with no pressure. “Starving men don’t realize how hungry they are after a while.”

There was a keening noise, and it took Tommy a second to realize that it was Wilbur. And then a hand was gripping him by the chin. “You have to eat, sweetheart. Come on,” his voice

had a hard edge of mania in it, “just open your mouth.”

It was impossible to stop it. But Tommy tried anyway. Clenching his teeth as hard as he could, but Wilbur’s fingers dug in and suddenly Tommy’s mouth was open. Tommy growled again, with more heat this time.

“His fangs haven’t dropped,” Phil remarked, “Wil-”

“I got it.” And Tommy didn’t know what to expect, but fingers in his mouth wasn’t it. He jerked at the sensation, tearing his head from Wilbur’s grasp. And suddenly it was like the whole room surged at him. Techno leaned in, grabbing his shoulders to hold still. Phil’s other hand reaching up to hold him by the nape of his neck, and Wilbur’s hands clamping down on his jaw.

Tommy let out a high pitched whine. And Phil shuddered at the sound. “It’s going to be okay, Theseus. It’ll be okay. Just trust us.”

No no no no! Tommy reached up to try and pry the many hands off of him. But it was impossible. They hardly budged from his effort. And then- fucking those fingers were back at his mouth! Tommy snapped at them. But Wilbur didn’t shy away from the attack, instead he touched Tommy’s gums. Rubbing with a firm pressure.

It *hurt*.

Fuck! Tommy thrashed, trying to twist out of the grasp of the vampires. But he couldn’t get away- even when Wilbur’s fingers pressed even harder against Tommy’s mouth. “Sh-top!” Tommy broke his vow of silence, but it didn’t work. And he could slowly feel his fangs sliding down into his mouth. Wilbur’s touch prodded them and pushed them until they were fully out.

They ached. It was like biting into an icecream. The cool air made them burn and Tommy wanted to snap his mouth shut but a hand gripped onto his jaw, forcing his mouth to stay open. Phil was crooning again, raising his bloody wrist up once more. And Tommy jerked back, a snarl escaping from him as Phil pressed his arm into Tommy’s mouth and *pushed*.

Tommy’s fangs ached before, now they positively *burned*. The blood that pooled into his mouth was fucking disgusting. It tasted so good, but it curdled sourly in his mouth. And reflexively Tommy swallowed hard, nearly choking from the effort. He was almost certain that some of the blood was actually his, the force of Phil pushing might have made his teeth bleed from it.

Tommy swallowed twice before he couldn’t handle anymore. He tried to jerk away, but another hand was keeping him still. No no no no! He couldn’t take it anymore. He let out a soft cry, the blood pooling into his mouth. He couldn’t drink anymore. A trail leaked from his lips, falling down his chin.

Phil made that horrible sound again. And that buzzing disassociating state was starting again, as a large hand cupped his throat and began to massage it. It took only a few more seconds before Tommy let out another breathy sob and swallowed again.

“You’re doing so good,” somebody murmured in his ear. “Just a little bit more. There you go. Can you do it again for me? You’re doing great.”

Tommy couldn’t stop it. Even when his stomach protested, it was just *too full*. They didn’t stop. Even when tears fell freely from his eyes. Somebody wiped them away. He let out little whimpers, trying to tell them to stop it. He couldn’t take any more. But they didn’t listen, didn’t stop, until finally the arm was pulled from his mouth. A trail of saliva connected to it, and Tommy let out a hiccupping sob.

“Shh, I’m sorry.” Hands pulled him into a hug. And Tommy couldn’t stop crying. His breath hitching quickly as he tried to breathe, gasping sobs falling from his mouth. “I’m sorry, Theseus. I’m so, so sorry.”

This- this was fucking horrible.

Tommy clutched at Phil until it all became just too much. Exhaustion weighed him down like a heavy blanket. He missed the moment when he passed out, his mind still buzzing and his body shaking. That damned crooning still in his ears.

They made him eat, like, every fucking day. Tommy never made it easy for them. They pulled him out from under the bed, kicking and screaming, and Tommy hated it. Hated how the rumbling cooing noise that Phil made knocked all sense out of him. Hated how Wilbur and Techno were there, always holding him down as they forced Phil’s wrist into his mouth. The blood was so thick and disgusting, and Tommy could barely stomach a few gulps before he was uncomfortably full and whining to get away.

Phil held him close, tucking his head into his neck and holding Tommy as he sobbed. Making that purring noise and it was awful. Just the worst. Then when Tommy was completely out of it, they put him back in the nest he made under the bed. Sometimes they would leave a new blanket for Tommy to use, or a silky pillow that was incredibly soft. Tommy used the blankets to build a fucking wall. Stuffing it into the cracks so they couldn’t just look under the bed and see him anymore.

Tommy would be left alone, in the dark. Bundled up in a nest that smelled like himself, shivering as the world grew too hot and icy cold. He never had vampire blood. And it sat heavily in his stomach. Giving him hot flashes. His skin prickled and he felt so uneasy. Shifting around in his nest, pawing at the blankets and pillows until he was tightly wrapped up. Still horribly hot while other times he felt the coldest he had ever been. He shoved his head into a pillow, and shivered uncontrollably while he felt bloated and horribly full to the point where he couldn’t move.

Tommy once read that vampires couldn’t throw up. And thinking about it, he never had before. It was a strange thing that separated him from humans. And he honestly wished he could now. It almost hurts now to feel so full.

It happened over and over again. Rinse and repeat. The bed frame would be pulled up and Tommy would be pulled out gently. He was forced to sit in Phil’s lap and drink his disgusting

blood and after a bit he'll be dumped back under the bed and left alone. Tommy could feel the other vampire's thoughts lurking in the background, but he ignored them all.

But one night, something else happened. Tommy woke up, feeling faint and shivering wildly. And all he could think was how this nest was *wrong wrong wrong*. It wasn't safe. It wasn't good enough. He was so cold. The air was freezing against the sweat that budded against his forehead, and Tommy couldn't *stay* here. It wasn't safe. It wasn't good.

Tommy wrapped the thickest blanket around his shoulders and pushed aside the walls he made in his nest. Dragging himself out from beneath the bed and onto his trembling legs that nearly folded up when he took his first step. His teeth chattered, and Tommy stumbled over to the door. Nearly falling over as he leaned up against it. He pulled at the doorknob and it turned freely in his hand. The lock quietly snicked open, and the door swung into the hallway.

He had never been outside of the room before. And Tommy wearily glanced around the dark hallway, the light switches turned off and looming shadows covered the walls. Tommy breathed through his nose, and- and-

This wasn't safe either. No. No this wasn't right.

The blanket dragged across the floor as Tommy wandered down the hallway. Zig zagging as he stumbled and swayed around. His nose was guiding him. But he didn't know where he was going. All Tommy could think about was how unsafe it was. It made his skin itch and anxiety bloomed into stomach. He needed to get somewhere better.

His feet padded quietly over the carpet. And Tommy found a staircase that led upwards. He sniffed, and something sparked somewhere in the back of his mind. It smelled faintly like safety. He followed it, breathing in deeply, climbing each stair even though it made his knees weak.

The smell was stronger at the top. There was a thick door that moved silently on its hinges as Tommy crept inside. The room was dark and it didn't have a light bulb sitting on the ceiling. Instead, there were dozens, if not hundreds, of candles placed around the room. A massive bed sat on one side of the room, covered in blankets and pillows of all kinds. A desk with papers littered the other half.

Tommy wanted-

He wanted to be on the bed. Somewhere soft. But he balked at the idea of it. The bed was so *open*. He needed a corner to hide in. But there wasn't a closed space for him to squirm into. Tommy let out a distressed whine, his eyes bouncing around the room. The shadows held nothing from his gaze. And he shuffled into the room, and his instincts protested everywhere he looked. Under the desk? No. It was cold there and still too open. The bed didn't have a space under it to hide beneath. And Tommy shuffled from one foot to another, his anxiety ratcheting higher and higher until he saw the box.

It was a coffin. The shape of it was unmistakable. It sat on a small pedestal, its lid propped open.

Tommy hated coffins. They were too small and he had too many memories of clawing at the silky interior when Dream would lock him in there but-

Somewhere in the back of his brain Tommy purred. It was like a heavy weight rose off of his chest. It was a big coffin, the wood shining black and Tommy didn't even hesitate before crawling in. It was enclosed. Safe. Warm. And it was practically dripping in that safe smell. Tommy didn't hesitate to close the lid, sliding it over his head and the darkness enveloped him.

It reminded him a bit of being under the bed. But it was better. And so much safer. There was a small shaky purring noise and it took Tommy a second to realize that it was emanating from his chest. There were pillows and soft sheets lining it, and Tommy wrapped himself up in a cocoon. It was good. A good spot to hide and sleep. Tommy buried his face into a pillow and breathed in a lungful of *safe safe safe comfort*.

The weight of the world rose off of him. And everything was good. Tommy closed his eyes and drifted off, purring happily.

There was a niggling sensation that disturbed Tommy. He rolled over when it became apparent that it wasn't going to leave. It was like a faint bell was ringing in the distance. It cut into the mindless void of sleep. It started off small. And Tommy ignored it for the most part until it spiked up suddenly. Once Tommy became aware of it, it grew louder and more apparent.

I-can't-find-him-outside.

Panic-worry-he-isn't-on-the-first-floor.

Have-you-checked-the-

YES-I-HAVE-CHECKED-THE-CLOSESTS.

Tommy's brows furrowed in annoyance, and he sluggishly buried his head into a pillow. He was still so tired, and he wanted to go back to sleep. It wasn't time to wake up yet. He could barely think. He wanted to slip back but the insistent ringing in the back of his mind wasn't giving up. It only grew louder as it slowly pulled him awake against his will.

Tommy never audibly communicated his thoughts on purpose before. And it felt awkward, like a fawn trembling onto their legs for the first time, but he sent out a mixture of his emotions and words. It was jumbled up and incoherent. *Annoyance-sleep-safe?-sleep-shh-shut-the-fuck-up-bitches.*

There was a slight pause, and Tommy relaxed into the pillow. Ready to go back to sleep when there was a curling message of *where-is-safe?-concern*.

Tommy huffed in anger. *Annoyance-stupid-bitch-it's-safe-it's-sleep-time-shhhh!*

Realization --oh-he-is-going-to-hibernation-aw-cute.

Look-for-small-dark-spaces.

Tommy grumbled but after that there was silence. No more messages or emotions filled his head. His mouth was slack and slightly opened as he breathed through it, the only sound in the coffin as he pulled himself back to sleep.

Some time had passed before he heard a shuffling noise. The sound of a pair of footsteps crossing the stone floor. Papers shuffled, and there was a squeak as wood was dragged on the ground. Tommy stirred slightly at the noise. But didn't rouse fully. Even as there was a loud thumping noise as something heavy and soft hit the ground. He slept peacefully. Until he felt cool air brush up against his face.

"Oh sweetheart," a voice crooned, just as Tommy felt *I-found-him-he's-okay* sent through the bond. "Aren't you the cutest thing I've ever seen. I wish I could take a picture."

Cute?? *Cute* ? Tommy was not cute! He opened one heavy eyelid to glare up at Phil. He sent his disgruntlement through the bond. Phil smiled warmly down at him. Tommy bared his own teeth at him. Asshole.

"I should've realized sooner you would have been drawn to my room." Phil leaned in, and Tommy tried to turn away but a hand reached up and caught his shoulder. It took a second, and it wasn't until there was a new weight settling behind Tommy that he realized that Phil fucking climbed in. Inside Tommy's new nest. What an asshole move.

The coffin lid slid shut once more, and Tommy relaxed slightly. He hadn't noticed he had tensed up when it had been open. But once again, he was enveloped in the darkness. The only sound was his muffled breathing.

With a few gentle nudges, Phil turned Tommy so that his face was pressed up against his neck. Just like how he did after every time he fed Tommy. For a second Tommy felt a flash of uneasiness, but it vanished as quickly as it came. Because with his nose pressed up against Phil's neck, Tommy smelled *safety*. It was Phil's scent he had followed until he found this room. It was his smell that Tommy wrapped himself up inside of this coffin. It was warm and smoky, unlike the cool temperature Phil's skin had, and it sucker punched Tommy's cognitive thoughts out of existence.

Tommy's head fell until it rested against Phil's collarbone. And he heard that crooning noise, as Phil played with the hairs on the back of Tommy's neck. "My perfect little boy. You really had us running around." Phil huffed with laughter, and Tommy pressed closer. *Safe safe warm*. "Techno nearly ripped out all of the cabinets looking for you. I've never seen Wilbur so frazzled when he was searching for you outside. Still, I think we did some damage to the house. I should have known you would have found your way here from the start."

Phil's nails lightly scratched at Tommy's scalp, and there was a new noise in the small space. A shuddering and stuttering purr. The hand paused, and a louder and deeper purr started up. Rumbling and vibrating Tommy as he laid on Phil's chest.

"It took us three days to find you." Phil murmured, "and I have never felt more worried since the day you were taken from us. I won't let you leave, Theseus. My son. I know you're

scared and you don't feel good. But I promise, I would never do anything to harm you. You're too precious. There was never a day where I stopped looking for you, darling."

Three days? Tommy blinked sluggishly, it had been three days since he crawled into this coffin? It felt like maybe a handful of hours. But his mouth was dry and his stomach was... empty. It wasn't full anymore. And... something clicked in his brain. He was *hungry*.

Tommy felt his fangs drop from his mouth. He didn't have the energy to bite. His fangs ached. He scratched them against Phil's collarbone, a quiet whine escaping him. He wanted to *eat*. He couldn't pierce Phil's skin with them though. "Oh," Phil's hand paused, "are you hungry? I'm sorry. Here, let me." Phil shifted, and suddenly the air smelled sweet and fresh with blood.

Tommy surprised himself as he lunged. His fangs clamped down on Phil's wrist, sucking in deeply as blood, sweet, delicious, beautiful, blood bubbled up in his mouth. Tommy shuddered, because this-

This tasted so *good*.

It wasn't nasty or disgusting, like ash on his tongue. It was vibrant and colorful, and it made his mouth water. Tommy was purring again, the noise escaping his nose as he sucked in breath between a few swallows.

"There we go." Phil crooned, "I knew the bond would happen eventually. Just took a little while for it to settle in place. It didn't help that your body wasn't used to ingesting so much blood. But it got the memo in the end." A hand pet at Tommy's hair, and he could feel Phil projecting *pride-pride-love-love-I-love-you*. "I love you so much. Eat all you want. You're going to need it for your hibernation."

Tommy drank and drank. Even when his stomach got too full, he drank even more. He couldn't get enough of it. He had never tasted something so good before. His tummy twisted after one more swallow, protesting. And Tommy let out a whine, and the hand in his hair gently pulled and tugged his fangs out of Phil's wrist. "I think you had enough, sweetheart. I bet you had a bit too much."

Tommy whined again, the sound so much louder in the coffin. But he fell back into Phil's embrace, curling up and shoving his head under Phil's chin. The stuttering purr rising up again. He was full and safe and Phil was here and everything was so good. Tommy sent out a *happy-safe-full-warm*.

Tommy's eyes slid shut again. And a hand wrapped around his neck and rubbed soothingly. "Not so fast, honey." Phil murmured, "there is one last thing we need to do. I'm sorry. You can go back to sleep afterwards. Alright? Can you look into my eyes?"

Tommy grumbled but he didn't resist as Phil nudged his chin up. Slowly he opened his eyes, they felt so heavy. Like weights were dragging them down. Phil purred when Tommy met his eyes, and the vibration rumbled into Tommy's chest and into his soul. "There you go, Tommy. You have such beautiful eyes."

Phil's eyes were blue too. They glowed in the dark coffin, almost like a glow stick. They were so pretty. They pulled him in. There was a distant buzzing on the edge of his senses. And Tommy couldn't blink, couldn't move his eyes away from Phil's. They were... mesmerizing. He couldn't force himself to look away for a second. Not even if he wanted to.

"There we go." Phil crooned, "that's it. Just fall in a bit deeper. I don't want you to get hurt. Yeah, you're doing so good. Just a little bit deeper. Don't resist." Deeper? Tommy didn't understand. All he knew was blue. Blue eyes staring down at him. He- he couldn't even feel his face. Everything was so distant and a fog covered his thoughts, weighing them down.

Tommy leaned into the hand, smooshing his face into Phil's palm. He was so tired, but he couldn't look away. A protesting whine escaped him. He wanted to sleep. Why couldn't Phil let him pass out?

"Shh, I know. It's so hard. But I promise it'll be better for you to go through this while you're hibernating. This way you won't feel it much, okay?" Phil tilted Tommy's head to the side, exposing his throat. "The first time is always the hardest."

Phil leaned in, and Tommy blinked at the space where his eyes were. He could still see the blue irises lingering in the air as an after image. Tommy could feel himself being pulled up, but the sensation was more of an afterthought. Cool breath washed over his neck, and then-

Pressure. Deep, aching, pressure against his throat. Like somebody was pressing two knuckles into his neck. It kind of hurt, but in a distant way. Tommy held still, unable to move. Limp as Phil held his shoulders in place. Until the seconds ticked on and the pressure increased from uncomfortable to distressingly so.

Something cold was in his neck? Dripping into him like from an IV. It traveled slowly down his neck and into his chest. Twisting and turning, until it settled into his heart. The organ didn't beat, and it rested there heavily in his chest. Tommy jerked slightly and let out a quiet confused whine. What- what was happening? He didn't understand? It made it difficult to breathe. Not that Tommy needed to, but he liked doing it.

Phil hummed against his neck. His thumbs rubbing up and down on Tommy's shoulders comfortingly. The icy cold stuff kept dripping into him from his neck. And it made his heart feel heavier as the minutes passed by. It kept being pumped into him, and slowly it began to leak out of his heart and travel into his arms and chest.

Tommy shivered violently. And the aching pressure against his neck flared and a flash of *real hot white pain* hit him. A pitiful whine escaped him. *What-did-I-do-wrong?* Tommy trembled, why was he in pain? What had he done wrong to deserve this? He wanted to sleep.

Comfort-sad-shhh-you're-okay reverberated into his head. And Tommy let out a keening cry in reply. It hurt. It hurt so bad. His brain remembered that he had limbs. And shakily he tried to move. But the grip on his shoulders tightened. *Don't-move-or-it'll-hurt-worse-sorry.*

Tommy didn't *understand*. The cold flooded into him. It made his head ache and his heart nearly shatter. The fog on his mind was lifting up, and Tommy was suddenly more aware of

everything. The silk that brushed up against his knees and feet. The soft velvet of the blanket that was still wrapped around his arms. And-

Phil's mouth firmly attached to his neck. Fangs buried deep into his jugular. Phil's head brushed up against Tommy's chin, and his hair tickled his skin. There was a soft sound as Phil swallowed against his neck.

Horror hit Tommy, and his hands tightened into balls, holding onto Phil's shirt. *Please-no-please-hurts-I'll-be-good-no.*

Shhh-almost-done-I'm-sorry.

There were other voices too. Ones that Tommy, in his haze, had forgotten. *It'll-be-okay-darling-comfort-love.* And *reassurance-love-you're-doing-so-good.* The other two who could listen in on their mental connection. Tommy was suddenly overwhelmed by all three of them sending soft and warm thoughts, and it distracted him from the ice that filled his veins and the pain in his throat. He could barely think on his own, and it was impossible when three others were sending their own thoughts into his head.

The white hot flash of pain came again when Phil slowly eased his long, sharp, fangs out of Tommy's throat. A trickle of blood followed. Tommy shuddered when Phil leaned in again. Half expecting him to sink his teeth into his neck yet again. But instead, Phil hummed reassuringly, watching patiently as the holes closed up, leaving two silver marks on the side of Tommy's neck.

"I know." Phil crooned, as Tommy sent him a frantic, *pain-pain-cold-cold* through the bond. "I'm so sorry, Theseus. I am. Another vampire's venom is the worst the first time. I'm so sorry, kiddo." He tucked Tommy's head into his neck again and wrapped the blanket tighter over Tommy's shoulders until he was cocooned in the fabric. "It's always so much harder when you're already a vampire. Our blood travels slowly through our body, and I had to wait until I could tell it was circulating through you."

Tommy croaked another cry out, half sobbing from the lingering pain and half from overstimulation. His head hurt. The ice hit his brain and it pulsed and ached. The world's worst brain freeze combined with a headache. His body violently shivered, and Phil pressed closer. His skin had once been cold, but now it was warmer than Tommy's, and he pressed closer in a desperate attempt to get warm.

"I'm sorry, kiddo." Phil whispered again and again, "it's time for you to go to sleep. You don't have to experience the whole change, okay? Just go to sleep now, and everything will be fine. We'll protect you."

Tommy didn't have to be asked twice. Shivering and whimpering, he curled up as much as he could and closed his eyes. It took two breaths before he was out. Phil crooned softly into his ears, holding him close as Tommy shuddered against him.

- tommy is bonded to phil now bc venom

- tommy squinting suspiciously at wilbur and techno because his instincts bristle at the sight of them
- techno and wilbur gotta bite tommy too rip, gotta be a coven
- won't be as bad as the first time

Fae Au

Chapter Notes

warnings of: torture of a minor, and starvation (sort of)

unedited

Written in March of 2022

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy hated full moons.

He hated how the morning of the full moon he would wake up with a smile on his lips, an excited thrum trapped inside of his chest. An endless energy ran through him, and almost instantly the balloon that swelled up inside of him popped with dread. The excitement faded away, leaving Tommy in his bed with a crushing despair that made it difficult for him to get up.

But he had to. He had his chores to complete. And Dream didn't care that it was the morning before the full moon. Tommy would lose what little food he could eat for the day and it would make it worse to deal with everything on an empty stomach.

He reluctantly did his chores. Feeding the chickens and weeding out the garden. Plucking the fruits and vegetables that grew from the vines. His stomach rumbled, and Tommy longed to sink his teeth into them. But he knew that nothing would cull the constant state of hunger. Tommy could eat and eat and eat and nothing would sate him. The taste of the fresh produce would wither in his mouth. Nothing ever tasted good.

Tommy walked into the house with the basket of food on his hip. Closing the door gently behind him. Dream didn't like it when Tommy was noisy in the morning. The smell of bread lingered in the air, and Tommy's stomach twisted up once more.

"Good morning," Dream set a cup down on the table with a gentle clink.

"Good morning Dream." Tommy recited, setting the basket down. And he began to wash the dirt off of the produce.

"How are you feeling today?" Dream asked.

Tommy couldn't lie. The word 'fine' was on the tip of his tongue. But Tommy woke up with joy in his heart that was quickly crushed like an ant under a boot. He felt like shit. The word was ready to fall from his mouth, and yet he could not say it. "Jittery," was all Tommy could

muster. He was practically shaking with unused energy. It mixed and churned in his stomach with Tommy's lack of food, making his head light and his vision faint.

"I'm sorry to hear that." Dream replied, before standing up. He turned to the cupboard that held all of the bottles and tinctures that Dream created. "We still have enough of your sleep draught for tonight. We'll need to stock up some more before the next full moon."

Tommy fell silent, and his attention was fully on the squash he was scrubbing diligently. He didn't *want* to sleep tonight. He didn't want to be trapped in the hellscape his mind created. The soft touches, the demanding words- it was everything Tommy hated.

But sleeping was the lesser of two evils. The moon dragged and pulled him into her grace. Tommy could get *lost*. Throwing himself into the magic and delirium of a full moon's dance.

Or worse other fae could find him on the one night they weren't bound to their realm and-

There was a click of bottles hitting each other, and Tommy flinched. "We're getting low." Dream said, and Tommy knew exactly what he was referring to. He didn't have to turn around and see the large glass flask that had only a few fingers worth of liquid left in it. The shimmering diamond-like fluid. It sparkled even without any light on it.

His tears.

It was fucking hard to cry. Tommy could feel sorrow. He knew the taste of pain. But crying was one of the worst things Tommy forced himself to do. It took a lot, and he meant a *lot* of effort to get himself to weep. Hell, Dream had broken Tommy's arm once and the pain still hadn't been enough for Tommy to tear up.

Not for the first time in his long life Tommy wished he wasn't a fae. That he had rounded ears and the ability to touch iron and tell the most outlandish of lies. He wanted to be human. Like Dream was. Then his tears wouldn't be worth anything.

The agony Tommy had to go through to cry was raw and burning, like a flesh wound that was still exposed to the air. The last time Dream had to kill Mushroom Henry in front of Tommy. The gut wrenching feeling of seeing one of his only friends die at the hand of Dream was enough to push him to wail and sob.

Those tears had been many and plentiful. It filled the flask to the top. But now it is nearly gone. It had only taken a few months of Dream taking a drop and putting it into his morning tea for it to deplete.

The gaping wound of Mushroom Henry's death was still bleeding. It hadn't been long enough. It never was.

"I know it hurts." Dream reached up and pulled Tommy into a hug. The vegetable falling from his loose grasp. Tommy pressed his face into Dream's jacket. It was warm. And Tommy liked every touch that Dream gave him, even though it was rare and far between. "I'm so, so sorry every time. I don't want to make you sad. You know that, right?"

Tommy cannot lie. The words would never get past his tongue.

But he could speak without words.

Tommy nodded, pressing closer to Dream's touch. "I'm sorry, Tommy. But it has to happen soon. I know how hard it was last time. But I promise as soon as it's over I'll make it up to you."

Dream always said that.

But that didn't fix Mushroom Henry's wrongful death.

"Okay." Tommy whispered, and Dream gave him one last squeeze before letting go.

"Let's do it tonight, okay? You'll sleep better afterwards." That was a lie. Tommy couldn't sleep on the nights the moon was full. Not unless Dream gave him a tonic. But Tommy jerked his head up and down in agreement, and Dream brushed a lock of his golden hair out of his eyes, tucking it behind one of his pointy ears. "Why don't you go down to the basement? I'll meet you down there in a little bit."

A shiver crawled up Tommy's spine.

The taste of the sleeping draught was still on his tongue as Tommy slipped from the waking world. God- by the end of it all Tommy wanted to pass out. His hands and arms couldn't stop shaking, and Dream had to pour the tonic down his throat. Pressing the bottle against his teeth with a gentle 'tsk.'

The burns from the iron were still hot and fresh against his skin, as if Dream was still holding the rod to his arms. His skin blistered and tightened like Dream was holding a flame against it. Breaking the skin and turning it an angry red. But the iron was cool and didn't hurt Dream as he held it in his hand.

It had taken hours. Tommy broke after the second hour passed, begging Dream to, "stop, stop please, it *hurts*."

With the moon ominous energy swirling around in him, and with the combined pain and despair that pulled Tommy down, it had made his head swim and ache like it never had before. The morning passed and the afternoon was nearly over by the time Tommy broke into tears. Sobbing wildly and endlessly. Tilting his head up and an inhuman noise rose up and rattled the door as he wailed.

Dream dropped the iron tools instantly, pulling out the flask and pressing it into Tommy's cheeks. Catching every drop. Soft and calm words echoed in Tommy's ears but he couldn't hear them as he cried out for... *something*. No, he wanted some *one*. Tommy was tired, hurt, in pain, and had too much nervous energy to figure out why his brain insisted somebody help him. He curled up in Dream's arms but it wasn't enough- he wasn't who Tommy wanted.

He let out that inhuman warbling cry again, and Dream shushed him. The reminder was enough to make his pointed teeth click together painfully. Dream played his body like a fiddle. Every time Tommy seemed to calm down, he would press on the burns until Tommy was sobbing again. Dream only stopped when the flask was three quarters of the way full. It was as full as it'll ever get.

Tommy's eyes burned like the iron had touched them. And he stared at the wall, blankly his mind buzzing and his skin felt itchy and raw. He had cried himself into a stupor, and he couldn't even force himself to think, let alone move, after Dream told him he was done.

Broken, laying on the cool stone of the basement, Tommy still felt it when the moon broke over the horizon. The nervous energy stilled, waiting in anticipation inside of him. It was late. A strange whine crawled out of Tommy's lips.

"Oh, sorry Tommy." Dream paused, and pulled out the familiar bottle that held the sleeping draught in it. "I hadn't noticed the time. It's time to go to sleep. You did so good today, kiddo. You've earned it."

It tasted awful. And it was still heavy in his mouth when he passed out. It was a relief. Like a cool balm finally being applied to his injuries. Taking away the fire that still licked at his limbs. Tommy sank into the darkness. Ready to just- not *exist* anymore.

But it never lasted long.

And this was the reason why Tommy *hated* the full moon.

The empty abyss vanished around him. Leaving him conscious and aware. He felt cool grass underneath him, cushioning his body and caressing his face. Tommy couldn't even muster up the energy to open his eyes. But he knew where he was. Beneath a giant weeping willow, it's leaving gently swaying in the breeze. It was a stunningly beautiful place.

There was the soft sound of grass being crushed underfoot, and Tommy resisted the urge to curl up into a little ball. Moving at all would be too agonizing. Maybe if he just pretended to be unconscious then hopefully-

"Oh starlight," a voice sang out, and the world twisted around Tommy to answer. The tree whispered it's hello, and the grass hummed beneath Tommy. The garden seemed to become even more alive as the other fae appeared.

Tommy had been here dozens of times. He knew that everything was... sweeter when the other fae was around. The colors were more vibrant. The sounds were crisper, the smells were better, and Tommy could taste the fresh dew in blossoms by breathing with his mouth open.

But right now It was just-

Too much.

Tommy let out that pathetic warble again, wanting to curl up into a ball. But his ribs fucking hurt. And the least painful thing he could do was just to lay there and take it. God, he just wanted to pass out. He craved the blissful state of just not being aware of anything.

“Sun drop?” The voice was quieter now, and the grass hummed louder as the footsteps approached. “Theseus? Sweetling are you al-”

The rustle of leaves and the sun shining down on Tommy pierced through his eyelids. And fuck not moving. Tommy would rather be in pain than be under the sun’s glare. He curled away from the light. Hands coming up and pressing against his eyes hard enough until he could see spots.

“*Theseus!*” The fae gasped out, fear lacing the word like a monster finally pouncing on it’s victim for the final time.

The word bounced around Tommy’s skull. And he weakly whined. The light disappeared as the leaves fell back into place. The shell that the weeping willows leaves encasing him once more. And hands gently touched his shoulder, pulling back quickly when Tommy flinched.

“No,” Tommy gasped out, “no please no. Please- I can’t. I can’t do it.” Not today. Not now. Not when he could only suffer.

The fucker always tried to trick him. Pulled him into easy conversations and joking around- the textbook example of a fae trying to trick a poor soul. Easy words, flattery, half baked truths- Tommy hated him. Hated how soft he would pull Tommy into his arms, unwilling to let him go even as Tommy struggled and writhed to get out.

Tommy despised how he was *trapped*. The fae had total control of the dream. Tommy didn’t even have a chance. If he ran then he would suddenly be next to the fae again. If he spat and cursed and hollered, his voice would fail him. He was just forced to be here, trapped by the whims of another fae.

The beginning of each night wasn’t awful. Tommy begrudgingly admitted it. It was when Wil- *the fae* was so happy to see him. He would joke and try to pull Tommy into a game. But it was near the end of the night that the happy facade would fall.

Tommy still remembered the madness in the fae’s eyes as he pinned Tommy in his arms. The hissing voice sounded like a viper, “tell me, star light, where are you? *Where are you, Theseus?*”

When Tommy was younger it felt like whiplash. He had trusted Wi- the fae. Thought he was a friend. But Dream had drilled it into Tommy’s head never to tell anybody where they lived or anything about it. The more Tommy evaded the fae’s answers the less cheerful he had been. Until he finally crushed Tommy to his chest and hissed threats and whispered promises.

“*You can never hide forever, Theseus. We’ll find you, and we’ll bring you home.*”

Tommy is home.

He is.

But as he feel hands pull him from his curled position, dragging his worn and tired body out, Tommy couldn't find it in him to protest like he normally did. Home is rainy days, staring out a window and watching the raindrops race each other. Home is the warm laughter of Dream as he's making a new batch of potions. Home is safety, love, and-

And-

Home isn't this.

His arms were gently pulled away from his chest, and Tommy let out a little soft sound in protest. But he couldn't pull them away, not when they were covered with burns. The fae whispered something under his breath and pulled Tommy into his arms. Cradling his back gently, and Tommy was going to- to-

There was a strange crooning noise. And it broke Tommy's brain.

All he could focus on was the pain. It *hurt hurt* hurt . But the weird noise scattered Tommy's thoughts like the wind sweeping leaves away. Tommy's fingers curled up in the fae's clothes, and he let out a soft little whimper. The noise inhuman. And Tommy strangled the noise, pushing it down and keeping quiet.

Dream hated it when Tommy did something unnatural.

"It's okay, starlight." The fae whispered, pulling Tommy closer in his arms, "it's okay. I got you. You're going to be safe. Nobody can hurt you. You don't have to hold back."

Tommy quietly hiccupped, but remained silent. And the fae made that low, rhythmic, humming noise again. And Tommy stifled the noise that rose up in him again. The fae sighed, and didn't push any further.

Which was good. Tommy couldn't take anything more today. He rested his face against the silky cool shirt the fae wore, and it kind of helped the pounding headache behind his eyes.

The fae took in a shuddering breath, jostling Tommy slightly. "Oh Star Light," the fae's voice was so sad, "who *did* this to you?"

Tommy bit back another soft whimper, and the fae crooned that mind breaking noise. "You're just a little one," the fae whispered, "you're just a *child*. You shouldn't- they shouldn't have- what kind of sick fuck did this?"

- Wilbur is angree
 - He begs tommy to tell him where he is, maybe even cries and that scares tommy
 - And then he demands
 - And he a scary fae who just wants his baby brother to come back home
 - He's all hurt, and only tommy can tell him where he issss.
-

Tommy watched as Dream packed up his bag. His legs danging off the chair, still too short to properly touch the ground. A few more vials are gently packed up, and Dream holds out his hand and Tommy places the last few items in his hand.

“I want you to be careful while I’m gone.” Dream said, shuffling the bag around as the bottles clinked together quietly. “Do you remember the rules?”

“Yes,” Tommy nodded, “don’t stay out after night. Lock the doors and make sure all the candles are out. And don’t let anybody inside.”

“I have a lot of expensive things here.” Dream reminded Tommy. “I don’t want you or others getting them. But if somebody breaks in, I want you to run. I can’t lose you.”

“Okay Dream,” Tommy nodded again, staring down at his hands. His fingernails were starting to grow back after the last... time. It’s only been a few weeks. And most of Tommy’s bruises were gone. The scabs of the cuts were still there, but they were getting smaller every day.

Dream paused by the door, “you know the full moon is in a few days, right?” Tommy nodded once more, “good. I restocked on the sleeping potion. Remember to take it. You won’t be able to sleep without it. I trust you Tommy.”

Tommy finally glanced up at Dream with a small smile on his face. “I trust you too, Dream.”

Dream patted Tommy on his head fondly, “good. Don’t get into mischief while I’m gone.”

“I won’t.”

Tommy wanted him to *leave* already. He was antsy. Tommy rarely got to spend any time in the cottage by himself without Dream. If it wasn’t for the fact that Dream had prior commitments that he agreed to before realizing that he would be traveling into the city during a full moon- Tommy wouldn’t have cared. Dream had always been home during the full moons. He had always watched over Tommy. But this was the first time he won’t be.

But the last time Tommy had slept during the full moon- when Wilbur had-

Tommy clenched his hands. Wilbur had gone ballistic from the sight of Tommy wounds and-

Tommy didn’t have the courage to see him so soon after the last full moon. Dream waved Tommy goodbye one last time, and Tommy waited by the doorway, watching as Dream’s figure slowly disappeared into the tree line to the nearby village. The folks were nice, but there was a reason why Dream built their home a fair distance away from the rest of them. If they knew that Tommy was Other Folk, it could cause a lot of problems.

Tommy wiped his sweaty palms down his shirt, already feeling nervous about the full moon in two days time. His empty stomach churned at the thought of seeing Wilbur again. But his

nerves didn't like the idea of what Tommy was planning this time.

Tommy wasn't going to sleep through the full moon this time. He's going to stay awake.

If Tommy had thought he was jittery before, it was practically nothing as he woke up to the morning of the full moon. For the first time, Tommy didn't have to stop himself from feeling... happy. A smile was already on his lips. And it stayed there this time, instead of Tommy stomping down on those unnatural feelings.

They weren't real. Brought on by the moon. But this time, there was no crushing disappointment. Tommy raced out of bed, and skipped around the empty cottage. He still had things to do. But he couldn't stop the energy that raced through him. It wasn't bad. It was just a lot. Tommy swept out the chicken coop, scaring a few of the hens away. He even weeded the garden thoroughly, before doing a quick sweep of the leafy greens to find any that were ready to be picked. To Tommy's delight, a couple carrots were ready. He had been eyeing them for a week or so, and he figured it would be a good treat.

They tasted like ash in his mouth. And his stomach was appeased by them, for only a few short minutes. But in that small amount of time, Tommy was content to not feel *hungry* anymore. He laid down in the grass, staring up at the sun as it slowly tilted over his head. Sinking lower, after it hit the precipice.

It was almost time.

When the sky began to turn orange, Tommy dragged himself up. The excitement slowly faded away, and now Tommy felt nervous again. His feet tapping on the ground as he walked back inside, his fingers plucking at a loose thread on his tunic. He couldn't stop moving. But even he paused as he stared at the entrance to the basement. A hole in the ground that was covered up by a wooden plank. Dream typically covered it with a spare rug they owned. But Tommy needed something from down there.

He swallowed heavily. And slowly moved towards it. If he didn't go down there, then he'd *have* to take the sleeping potion. "You can do this, Tommy." Tommy spoke to himself, and took a halting step towards the trap door. "You can do this. Dream isn't here. It's not going to be a bad day. It'll be easy."

It was easy. And yet it was also incredibly difficult. Tommy lifted the rug off and threw it to the side before pulling the plank up. The dark narrow stairs caught Tommy's eyes, and his mouth began to run dry. But it was okay. This is okay. He just had to go down there and grab one thing. Tommy closed his eyes and edged a foot down the cool basement stair, and the next one followed it. And one next step was easier. And soon Tommy was down in the basement, lit up by a block of glowstone in the corner to prevent mobs from finding a home in the dark space. Spiders loved the dark.

Tommy avoided looking at the sharp instruments, instead he pushed past them to a familiar wall. There, coiled up like a rope, was a chain with a single cuff on it. It wasn't made out of iron, but of copper. And the metal didn't burn him as he picked it up.

A key was still in the lock. And Tommy took it and shoved it into a drawer. He wouldn't need it until the morning. Instead, he sat down on the ground and fitted the cuff over one of his ankles. The other end of the chain was set deep into the wall. But there was plenty of length, hell, Tommy could still go outside with it on. He probably couldn't get further than the gate, but there was a lot of room to move.

Tommy wanted to see what it was like to be awake during the full moon. But he didn't want to get *lost* in it. This was a safety precaution.

As soon as it was clasped onto his leg, Tommy scurried out of the basement and the stairs, leaving the plank still lifted up. The chain rattled across the ground. The weight of it on his ankle was strange. But Tommy reminded himself that it was just a safety precaution. In the morning he can take it off. No problem.

Tommy sat in the kitchen chair and held his knees to his chest as the sun slowly sank in the horizon. He stared out the window. Watching as the sky turned from a dusty pink to a mellow blue to pitch black darkness.

Stars poked out of the shadows. And Tommy waited, itching to move but not allowing himself to do so. And slowly, like a magnificent beast, the moon began to rise.

It wasn't like a lightning strike. Nor a sudden roll of thunder. Tommy waited in the dark home, quietly listening to the crickets chirping outside of the windows. Waiting for... something to happen. The endless energy inside of him quieted. Stilling at the sight of the moon, so large and beautiful above Tommy's head.

There was a long pause and...

Nothing.

Tommy watched as the moon slowly rose higher into the sky. The stars glittering beside her. And yet- Tommy waited with baited breath, nothing happened. It was like any other normal night. The copper clinked quietly as Tommy moved, uncurling from the chair after maybe an hour or two.

Tommy was still wide awake. Still jittery. But now there was deep sense to just... *wait*. Like the whole world was holding it's breath. Watching. Waiting for the right time to spring the trap. And Tommy continued to sit in the darkness of the cottage, and another hour passed. And he kicked out his legs.

"This-?" Tommy muttered under his breath, "this is what scared me?" He softly laughed, "it's nothing." There was a type of relief clinging to Tommy. But also a sense of disappointment. There had to be a reason why Dream always drugged Tommy on the full moon. A reason why Tommy always had to sleep.

But instead he felt like he sipped a cup of coffee and was about to go outside to complete his chores. Maybe Dream didn't want Tommy awake when he was asleep? But sleeping potions are expensive. Dream told Tommy this dozens of times before. So why-

Tommy heard a single note slowly drifting through the air. And his pointed ears jerked at the sound. A violin. With a bow, slowly sliding across one string. Drawing out the sound, as the wind carried it over the still air.

He held his breath, stilling. Listening to that one note. That one, single, musical note.

And something deep inside of him broke. A tight little ball. Something Tommy had never felt before. But now he knew of it's existence, he could *feel it*. And it slowly cracked, broken jagged pieces falling apart as it slowly unfurled itself.

A second violin joined the first. The two notes intertwining. Harmonizing. Twirling together until they became one. And a third one joined, and a fourth and slowly, an orchestra began to bud to life. Like blossoms slowly opening themselves up in the morning after a cold night, glowing brightly and reaching up to the warmth- the music began to take shape.

It stole Tommy's breath away. And just as suddenly as the first note began, the violin stopped. The rest of the orchestra halting. Leaving the air bereft and empty. And Tommy stumbled and fell to his knees at the loss.

When- when had he moved from the chair? When had-

And then the music broke through the silence. The violin and a fiddle jokingly battling back and forth as the rest of the music crescendoed and swayed upwards. A merry jolting song. The tempo was light and bouncy, and suddenly Tommy needed to hop and skip and jump in time. He stumbled back to his feet, his eyes wide. The cottage was only the background. His focus solely set on the distant lights in the woods.

Distant laughter rang out. Bells clinging together. A firework went off. The whistle shrill and Tommy saw the sparks barely rising above the trees. He leaned closer to the window until his face was pressed up against it. Unable to even *blink*.

They were having a party.

It was... a party. The fiddle rose up and did a little merry tune, and Tommy could barely see shadows swaying and people jumping and-

There was even the smell of *food*, now. Tommy could catch it on the gentle breeze that brought him snippets of incomprehensible words. Wait- breeze? When-

Tommy was outside now. The window pried open, a flower pot had shattered by his feet and yet he hadn't notice. Tommy blinked at the sight, his vision swaying until he looked back up at the dancing lights again. He forgot about the shards near his bare feet, instead, he was enraptured.

Meat. Sizzling, hot, fresh meat. Cooked over an open flame. Tommy could smell the spices on it. The salt, pepper, and lemon zest filling his nose. And his stomach rumbled. And for once, his mouth watered until he had to swallow rapidly to prevent himself from drooling. There was a distant bark of laughter, and the fiddle let out a funny shriek when the violin caressed it with soft notes.

Tommy giggled softly under his breath. He could see better now. There were people dancing. All shapes and sizes, linking their arms together in a circle and doing a fancy jig. Back and forth. Hither and yonder. Flicking out their wrists, and then doing high kicks. None of them were in sync. But it matched perfectly.

He wanted to dance too. He wanted to-

Tommy wanted to be with them. His eyes didn't break contact from the sparkling lights. The distant conversation. The music that broke something inside of him and made him yearn-

There was a yank on his ankle. And it made Tommy nearly trip, if it wasn't for the fact that his hands were resting on the fence. One foot braced against the wood, the other held back by the...

The chain.

Wait.

Why was there a-?

Tommy blinked sluggishly before his memory came back to himself. And suddenly the lure of the party in the distance didn't hold as much sway. It was slightly muted, still pushing and dragging at Tommy to continue on his journey. But-

Oh *no*. Tommy felt a sudden stab of fear. He had almost walked away. He had almost ran straight into the arms of the other fae.

Of *Wilbur*.

Tommy felt a cold chill run down his back. And he violently shivered. Okay. Now he saw why Dream made him sleep during this. Just being awake drove Tommy act like a mindless zombie. And he was actually very far away from the other fae. They were a distant light on the mountain range. It must be where a mushroom ring had formed. Dream would want to know where it is, so he could get rid of it. Tommy heard him bitching about they kept popping up.

It was also implied that it was because of Tommy that the mushrooms grew like that. Tommy always tried to hide whenever Dream got in a mood like that. There was always a chore to be done, and Tommy would flee to complete it.

Tommy shuddered with revulsion, and decided it was time to go back inside. Maybe he should just take the sleeping tonic. The small little ball inside of Tommy wailed tragically the second Tommy turned away. Begging. Pushing. Throwing itself around inside of Tommy to *join them. Please please join them.*

No. Tommy shoved it down. But it still hurt. Still begged. Still tempted his control. Tommy took in a deep breath. And he turned his gaze to critically look at his surroundings. Mist was thick and slowly traveled over the blades of grass, filling the air with a gentle fog. And Tommy could still hear the music bouncing up and down, getting faster and louder as time

went on. It echoed around the mountain range, turning it eerie. There were more screams of laughter. Of people talking in the background. And the smell of food was strong- choking his every breath and it was so overwhelming and-

Tommy sat down on the ground, holding his head in his hands. The mist swirling around his knees. Everything was starting to feel dizzy. And he just needed a second to *breathe*.

The moon hit the zenith in the sky, and everything stopped.

The music shrieked loudly and stopped abruptly. The laughter fell quiet. The smell disappeared. Leaving Tommy's gasping breaths the only thing he could hear. For a second, Tommy hysterically thought he had gone deaf.

But no, he could still hear his own heartbeat pounding in his chest. The faint rustling of his clothes, as he slowly looked up. His own hitched breaths, as he stared out into the distance.

The lights were still there. The shadows of people stretched across the ground. But they were all still. Motionless.

Not a whisper floated over the breeze.

What the hell was happening?

Then, there was a low noise. So low, Tommy couldn't pick it up at first. It buzzed at the edge of his hearing. Until it grew louder, a deep gravely hum. Inhuman. But clearly from a man, softly singing. The voice was by itself, no instruments joining the mellow song. But Tommy froze, the tight ball inside of him did the same. Both holding their breath to listen intently. Feeling the cool air caress his knees and arms, staring out into the distant scene- enraptured.

The hum held... words. Unspoken. But Tommy could still understand it.

A low, breathy croon. Much like a bird's low warble, filled the air. It was filled of love. Love of the moon, his wife. Of his children. And of his people. His pride and joy, watching them enjoy the festivities of a midsummers moon. The kingdom flourishing, the progress they made and created since the last celebration. Things were good. And he is happy.

But-

It was hard to believe this fae. Because with every note, he was *miserable*. Horribly, crushingly, sad. It broke Tommy's heart just *hearing* it. If a human could hear it, they would be in tears. But Tommy was made of sterner stuff. He sniffed instead.

After it was over, the music started up again. This time, a bit slower, but still merry nonetheless. Voices swelling with their own songs, intertwining and happy. But there was still a note of sadness lingering in the air. The moon above him shone down, lighting up the world around him with her cool light.

There was a whisper, on the edge of Tommy's hearing. His pointed ears flicked, and he fearfully glanced around. Who was talking? But Tommy couldn't see anybody. There was a gentle nudge, and-

Tommy looked up to see the moon above him. Another faint whisper caressed his ears. Too soft to catch at first. *Why don't you sing, my star child? Come home to your family.*

Without thinking- without even knowing- that twisted ball in his gut took over. Tommy sucked in a breath, still staring up at the moon with wide, bewitched eyes and-

How could Tommy refuse her?

He let out a strangled, pitiful note.

It was nothing like those who sang before him- who didn't even pause to take in a breath. The noise Tommy made was a half cough, warped, whimper. That held nothing but a scared, tentative, *plea*.

For what- Tommy didn't know. But he needed *something*.

The moon beamed down on him. Warm, despite it's cool light. And Tommy could feel her pride and her love, and it made his empty heart swell to the point where it felt like it would burst. But the sad noise Tommy made buzzed in his ears. Echoing around in the complete, dead, silence.

And it was at that very moment that Tommy knew that *they heard him*.

Tommy scrambled to his feet. The leaves and grass rustling underneath him. And he paused, like a deer in headlights, staring out over the empty expanse. Surely they wouldn't be able to find him. Right?

The breeze whipped around Tommy. Rustling the leaves on the trees. And then it died. Leaving the world in a horrible, still, silence. Tommy's heart the only sound in his ears.

Thump.

Tommy took a single step back.

Thump.

A deep drum was rhythmically ringing out.

Thump. Duh - thump.

Tommy took another fearful step back.

The leaves shivered. But there was no breeze to cause them to move. Tommy shuddered.

Thump. Duh-thump-thump.

There is a faint whisper. A voice, too faint and far away to hear it. But another joins. And another. Until Tommy could barely pick up the words being chanted. *The hunt. The hunt. The hunt is coming.*

Tommy took another halting step back, and another. Until he turned and sprinted to the back door. The chain around his ankle caught on his leg, and fuck- Tommy went through the window, not the doorway. He jiggled on the locked handle fruitlessly, before doubling back.

The hunt. The hunt. The hunt is com-ing.

Tommy cursed under his breath and scrambled up to the window, heaving himself up and through it. His dirty feet knocked another pot over. But he didn't care. The chain was still hanging out of the window, scattered across the yard. And Tommy pulled on it quickly, frantically dragging every inch of it inside so he could close the fucking window.

The voices were growing louder. Chanting rhythmically. Over and over. The drums matching the beat.

The Hunt. The Hunt. The Hunt Is Com-ing. You Run. You Run. You Bet-ter Run.

In the distance, a dark cloud started to rise. Tommy paused to stare at it. The lights had gone out. And in their place, a dark mass began to take to the sky. And it took Tommy only a second to realize that they were *birds*.

The Hunt. The Hunt. The Hunt Is Com-ing. You Run. You Run. You Can-not Hide.

Tommy pulled the last links of the chains in the cottage, and pulled the window closed. He grabbed the copper chain in his arms, and rushed to the basement, dumping the metal down the stairs. He was glad he didn't light a candle earlier, like he had planned to. The cottage was dark, and he stumbled into a chair in his hurry. He grabbed the rug he threw earlier, and pulled it over the plank as he slipped into the basement. Pulling the last few links of the chain under the plank.

The chanting was growing louder, shaking the door with the noise. Dirt fell from the ceiling, dusting the room. Tommy pressed his palms to his ears, grimacing at how loud they were shrieking at him.

THE HUNT. THE HUNT. THE HUNT IS RI-DING. WE FIND. WE FIND. WE'RE FIND-ING HIM.

And with one last *thump* from the drums, it grew still once more.

Tommy's shaking breaths was the only noise. He didn't move. His eyes clenched shut, afraid of opening them again. His body trembled.

This was a mistake. He had disobeyed Dream. And now- now Tommy screwed up. He wanted Dream here. He wanted him to take charge now. To tell Tommy what he needed to do. This was scary. Tommy gulped in another breath. He wanted to sleep now. He'd- fuck. Tommy would never be awake during a full moon ever again. It was awful and horrible and terrible and-

Tommy was working himself up. He should calm down, but the hysteria rising up was pushing him to just melt. No. Tommy needed to breathe. His lungs stuttered as he tried to

force them to slow down. He just... he just needed to calm down. Nothing bad would happen. This cottage was warded. Tommy could just stay in the basement until the full moon was over and it'll be okay. Dream will come back and Tommy would never, ever, stay awake during a full moon again. This was more than enough to last him a life time.

Seconds ticked on. There wasn't another drum beating in his ears, or another ethereal voice calling out through the mist. It was calm. Quiet. Safe. Tommy's frantic panic was settling down. It'll be okay. As minutes passed, Tommy reassurances felt less like a lie and more truthful. See? Tommy was safe. He is safe now.

Tommy opened his eyes. The darkness only lit by a small crack from where the plank rested unevenly on the hole above him. Tommy turned around, leaning in closer to the crack. Peering out at the moon-lit room above him.

The living room of the cottage was still. Not a single item out of place. Tommy could spy a window, the cool light falling from it and across the floor. See? Everything was fine.

Tommy sighed with relief.

A dark hand banged against the window like a gunshot.

Tommy jumped in fright, nearly letting out a scream if he didn't slap a frantic hand over his mouth. A sudden surge of adrenaline hit him. And Tommy watched, helpless and wide eyed, as a face appeared in the window.

The only word that could describe it was *wrathful*.

Dark eyebrows hanging over blue electric eyes that pierced the darkness. They scanned the room, and the fae's lips drew back to show sharp, dangerous teeth. Blonde hair fell into it's eyes. It made a inhuman shriek, seemingly frustrated by the appearance of an empty cottage.

Just as fast as it appeared, it let out a low furious snarl before vanishing in a flash. Moving too quickly for Tommy to catch which direction it disappeared from. There was a shadow of wings and-

It was gone.

He pulled himself away, holding his hand over his mouth in horror. Torn between holding his breath and letting out a shaking gasp every time his lungs protested his lack of breathing.

What the hell? *What the hell?* Tommy scurried down the stairs, the chains softly rustling far too loudly. Tommy's heart lept into his throat at the sound. It was too loud. It would hear it. It would know that Tommy is there. He ran to the back corner of the room, curling into a ball in the corner. The furthest Tommy could actually get away from the *thing* outside.

Holy shit.

Tommy pressed his forehead to his knees, trying to stop himself from hyperventilating. But ultimately failing to do so. Oh no. *Oh no* . They were going to find him. They were going to

kill him. Tommy's hands threaded through his hair and began to pull at it. Or worse, Wilbur is going to get him.

No. *No*. Tommy was safe. He's safe. Because he's in the house. They can't get him here. It's safe. Dream told him it was warded. And it'll protect him. He just had to stay here, and don't move and-

Yeah. Yeah everything will be fine.

Fuck, who was Tommy trying to fool? Wilbur had been trying to pry Tommy's secret's out of him for *years and years*. And now they were going to get him. They were finally going to take Tommy away. He didn't want to die. The fae will kill him.

Tommy could feel the hair starting to rip as he yanked on it. Harder and harder. They were going to get him. Wilbur was finally going to kill him and it's all Tommy's fault. He should have listened to Dream. He should have slept and-

This was all his fault.

A howl of a wolf broke through Tommy's thoughts. And he scrubbed at his face. It was dangerous. All of this was his fault. If he had just listened and slept then none of this would have happened. But instead Tommy was a coward, and he tried to avoid Wilbur and now they were after him.

Tommy didn't know how long he sat in the dark for. But everything was starting to grate of his nerves. The sound of crickets chirping were too loud. The darkness seemed to be closing in on him. The clink of the chains were too much. Tommy shakily stood up and retrieved the key from the drawer, and finally took the fucking cuff off. It very nearly killed him. If Tommy hadn't been fast enough to move the chains from the yard. If he couldn't climb through the window. If-

There were a lot of 'ifs.'

Surely, it had to be nearing morning soon. Right? Tommy hoped it would be soon. Once the sun began to rise then the fae had to leave and Tommy can be safe. But even as he thought this, he heard the pounding of hooves. A large horse came riding past the cottage. And Tommy closed his eyes and wished that it would keep moving but-

It slowed down.

"No," Tommy whispered quietly, "no no no."

But his pleas were unheard. Tommy heard the crunch of gravel, as a rider dismounted. Maybe... it was somebody from the village. Somebody here to check up on Tommy. They must've heard about the commotion last night and they were nice enough to visit and make sure that he was okay. Right?

Right? That had to be the truth. Tommy could hear the person slowly walking around the cottage. Pausing a few times. And Tommy shivered in trepidation. They're just checking to

see if anybody was home. They're going to leave soon. And Tommy can be left alone.

The footsteps crunched as they arrived back at the front door. And Tommy heard a loud pounding on the door. There was no other sound. And finally, Tommy couldn't take not *knowing*. He abandoned the corner, and with soft footsteps, climbed the rickety steps to peer through the crack.

With relief, Tommy noticed how the sky was starting to lighten outside. The night felt like an eternity. And it was surreal to see that the terror was almost over. There was maybe an hour before the sun rose.

Knock knock knock.

Tommy flinched at the noise. But didn't move. Instead, he watched with baited breath. And a few seconds later, the door was knocked down. The wood falling with a bang. Causing Tommy to jump at the sound.

Metal clicked almost silently, as a knight in black armor stepped through the doorway.

Wait- wait wait wait. They weren't supposed to be able to *come inside*. Tommy stifled a whimper, holding both of his hands over his mouth tightly. Crushing his jaw closed. How did they get in? Dream said he warded the place.

The black knight stepped further into the cottage. The armor was strange. The metal was slick and form fitting, rather than bulky. And it didn't clank like regular metal would, instead it was soft and nearly silent. A black cape was thrown over their shoulders, the only splash of color was a thick white fur trim around the collar.

Tommy swallowed heavily, as the fae walked in. Scanning the room. The helmet showing nothing of their face, only sign of it's actions was it tilting slightly as it looked around. It wandered into the kitchen, before with a slight amount of effort, ripped the doors off the cupboards. The wood splintered and fell to the ground. Dishes rattled from their spots, and the fae only glanced at them before moving on to the next set.

Tommy was hyperventilating. How much longer until he is found? The black knight was searching. Peering into every shadow. Nothing was escaping it. No detail was lost. It was almost methodical. Tearing apart another door to look inside.

Then there was a pause. And Tommy could see the exact moment the fae noticed the broken pot sitting underneath the window. The armor stilled, and the fae cocked it's head slightly before moving to kneel next to it. Reaching out to touch the fallen dirt.

It's head snapped up. Looking straight at Tommy.

Tommy jerked back, nearly falling down the stairs. He scrambled back, pressing his hands tighter to his face. Unable to breathe. Unable to do anything but shake.

He waited for the plank to be thrown aside, like the cupboard doors were. And Tommy could hear the footsteps creek as the fae crossed the room. And... *continued* to walk over Tommy's

head.

The footsteps didn't pause. They moved on, down the hallway to Tommy's room. There was the faint and familiar sound of the hinges creaking as the door to his bedroom was opened, and there was suffocating silence.

Oh shit. *Oh shit oh shit oh shit.* How much longer could Tommy stay here for? It wasn't safe now. They *got in*. He had to leave. He should leave- actually. Because if the fae caught him in the basement there was nowhere to run. He was a sitting duck. He needed to go- *and now*.

Tommy scrambled up the steps once more. His heart clawing it's way up his chest and throat, trying to force it's way out of his mouth as it jackhammered away. He needed to go. The fae would find him. And Tommy wasn't *safe*.

His fingers pressed up against the plank. And lifted it up by a hair before pausing. He had to be quiet. Like the time Tommy snuck out of the house after dark, and Dream was asleep on the couch. He had to be a mouse.

Tommy knew where all of the noisy parts of the floor were. He knew where to avoid it. But the pressure of slipping out of the cottage unnoticed while there were fae trying to hunt him down made his head spin and his stomach feel sick. How could he do this? When everything was so terrifying, how could Tommy be brave?

There was simply no choice in the matter now. It was do it, or die.

Tommy pushed the plank up further, and every noise he made, the soft shaking breath he took and the shifting of his weight on his knees, felt like hammer hitting a nail in his ears. Tommy set the plank carefully aside, the wood making a tiny little scrape, made him flinch.

He was exposed now. The doorway was only a few feet away. And his time was running out. Tommy clambered to his feet. Mindful of where he was placing them. Feeling the adrenaline rushing through his stomach and giving it a sickening twist as he crept out into the living room and slowly- so so slowly- out the front door.

His feet hit the smooth stones outside, careful not to disturb them too much. And he took two steps, relief rising up because *he got out. He did it without alerting the fae.*

Something shifted in the corner of his eye. And Tommy's body locked up with fear as his head whipped around. Standing by the gate was a massive elk. A black saddle strapped to it's back, the leather gleaming in the fading light. The beast gave out a long snort, it's dark eyes looking at Tommy with an unreadable expression.

Tommy didn't dare blink- didn't dare move. And the elk let out a long huff, before opening it's mouth and letting out a keening moan . The gruff noise was mixed with a thin, eerie whistle that pittered and shrieked like a banshee wailing.

There was a shuffle of movement from inside the cottage. And Tommy turned tail and bolted into the dark forest. He didn't care if they heard him now, he needed to *run*.

They were going to get him.

Tommy threw himself blindly through the dark forest. Smoke hung heavily in the air, thick and choking. Almost similar to the smell of cooking meat that Tommy had tasted on the air only a few hours previous. But Tommy knew these woods, he had spent years here with Dream on the outskirts of a small village that grew as the seasons changed. He had a slight advantage.

Another wolf bayed in the distance, and Tommy nearly slipped from flinching at the noise. His feet slid on the debris on the ground, and his hand caught on a tree to keep himself upright as he changed direction and fled.

A crow above him cawed before bursting into motion, its wings fluttering as it too, sped away. The wind swept past, and the leaves and bushes shook with sound. And Tommy- Tommy was frightened. Every new sound made him jump as he sped through the dark trees. Even the sound of his own breathing scared him.

If Tommy could get to the village then maybe he could hide. Right? It wasn't very far. It had grown so much over the past few years and-

Tommy burst out of the trees, and stopped in horror. Below him, the village burned. Thick smoke clogging up the crystal clear sky, and as his lungs stuttered and he stopped breathing in shock, he could hear the distant yells of people. Inhuman shapes dipped from the shadows. Monstrous *things* that were bigger than men prowled. A woman screamed, and abruptly it cut off.

He stood there for a few seconds, watching in panicked terror as the only place Tommy knew was burning to ash. There was a distant crash behind him. And it broke him out of his thoughts. The village wasn't safe. Nothing was safe from the fae.

Tommy just had to outlast them at this point. Because-

He didn't know what else to do.

The sun was going to rise soon. Fae can't stay in the mortal world once the night of full moon was over. He just had to stay away from them until then. Tommy took one halting step back into the forest, his eyes still stuck on the massacre of flickering orange light, before taking yet another.

And finally he turned and ran back into the shadows. If Tommy could find a cave, or a corner or someplace- then maybe he'd be safe.

Thump.

A drum beat.

A wolf howled, even closer than before.

Thump.

A bird fluttered it's wings above Tommy's head. Another caw from the dark shadows. Tommy whipped his head up but he couldn't spy the bird. The distraction nearly cost him. Banging his shoulder against a stray tree he didn't see. Still, Tommy ran blindly forwards.

Thump. Duh-thump.

A deep growl came from Tommy's right. And there was a flash of yellowed eyes. A wolf with silvery-white hair, a red collar wrapped around it's throat. It stepped from the shadows, and Tommy's feet slid as he tried to change direction. He could hear it let out a harsh bark as it began to chase him.

Thump. Duh-thump-thump.

Tommy's bare foot hit the forest floor. Pine needles and leaves scattering under his frantic movement.

The Hunt.

A wolf snarled somewhere behind him. It's paws were hitting the ground to the beat.

The Hunt.

A branch reached out and whipped at Tommy's arm, scratching it. Tommy barely felt it, instead, he struggled through the underbrush and pushed himself to move as fast as he could.

The Hunt Is Com-ing.

There was another wolf. Tommy saw a flash of white fur through the trees a head of him and he threw himself at a different angle. No no no. He had to keep going. He had to get out of here. The sun was going to rise soon, Tommy could make it.

We Found.

There was an thick but empty blackberry bush. And Tommy threw himself underneath it. Crawling out the other side, and he felt hot breath and snapping teeth at his heels. Barely moving his feet in time to avoid getting bitten. Tommy stumbled to his feet, his knees aching and weak like a new born fawn. But he had to keep going. He had to-

A shadow caught his eye.

We Found.

There, at the end of the path Tommy stumbled onto, was the black knight. Sitting astride the massive elk. Oh fuck. Tommy turned to flee, and he heard the elk's hoofs beating at the ground. Tommy tore himself off the path. Trying to weave through the trees. But it was getting closer. The pounding was getting louder. The voices were screaming.

WE FOUND THESEUS.

Tommy's breath was knocked out of him, as a metal clad arm leaned down and swept him off his feet. Pulling him up into the saddle.

The world suddenly became jumbled and incoherent. The jolting motion of the elk underneath him was causing his vision to go blurry. The arm that roughly pulled him up was wrapped around Tommy's torso tightly, holding him close to the metal breastplate. Pressing Tommy tightly. He almost couldn't breathe, his lungs burning. Tommy pushed at it, trying to kick and find a bit of leverage to pull himself free. But the grasp only got tighter.

"Let me go!" Tommy gasped out, trying to dig his fingers into the arm. The metal was unforgiving. "Let me go!" The words were almost inaudible with the pleading whine that escaped.

Instead of answering, the black knight tucked Tommy under the dark cape. And with it's other hand, brought out a war horn. The bone glinted white under the moonlight, a rim of gold around the end. And the fae raised it to it's mouth, the helmet's mouth guard tilted up slightly so didn't obstruct it as the knight blew a long, deep reverberating note.

Tommy pressed his hands over his ears. It was too loud.

It echoed around the mountain range. And shortly after, dozens of other horns rose up to greet it. All of them bouncing around in a strange, jumbled, harmony.

The black knight broke through the tree line to a vast field. And Tommy watched as dozens of other riders appeared. All on shadowy dark beasts. Their helmets tilted up to stare at the black knight.

At *Tommy*.

He let out a keening whine, trying to shove at the black knight. But it was halfhearted at best. He couldn't outrun *all* of them. Even if he somehow managed to get away, the wolves that followed the elk would corner him. It was over.

It was all over.

The crushing grip softened slightly, and the black knight pulled the cape more securely around Tommy. There was a deep rumble that came from it's chest, and the sound was almost soothing. "We'll be there soon," the fae said, it's voice deep. "Don't worry."

Tommy shuddered, and he tried to press against the chest plate again. And the fae didn't say a word, instead taking the reins with his free hand and the elk beneath them began to bound out into the valley.

The jolting sensation was strange and Tommy grabbed onto the cape to stop jerking with the motion. The tall grass beneath the hooves sped past them. Moving so much faster than a horse.

And then Tommy saw it.

There was a dark hole carved into the side of a hill. Tommy knew this land. He knows the streams, the trees, the mountains- and yet he never saw this before. The thought struck him as they got closer, it was the entrance to the *Underhill*. The entrance to the fae realm.

Tommy pushed once more at the restraining hold, trying his best one last time. He wiggled and even tried to kick, but the hold only grew tighter and crushed Tommy to the metal plate. He let out another sad cry.

Three more bouncing steps, and Tommy closed his eyes as the elk crossed the threshold.

-
- The magic in the underhill presses down on tommy
 - its hard to think, hard to breathe
 - its overwhelming
 - knight, aka techno, takes him to the castle
 - wilbur is like: HE DIDNT COME INTO MY DREAM SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED- omg is that him
 - Tommy takes one look at Wilbur and bursts into tears
 - (crying is HARD for fae)
 - Wilbur and techno flounder trying to get Tommy to stop crying
 - Tommy can't stop and his panic over wasting tears is making him cry harder
 - uhhhhh
 - phil watches tommy sleep
 - I feel like i wrote this but I can't find it anywhere so lol the end I guess

Chapter End Notes

waving hand in the air, uhhh fae tears can make ppl immortal. And Dream snatched Tommy from the fae realm decades prior. SBI have been looking for their younger brother since. Wilbur power comes from dreams, so he can pull Tommy into his dream during full moons. Uhhhh Kristin is the moon. Phil really be out there marrying all powerful beings who humans cannot comprehend.

One thing i dont see in fae fics are the Hunt. And i think its a crime. of course, the vibe of this quickly left me after I wrote the Hunt so you might as well enjoy it.

if you are inspired by this, pls let me know!

Kitty AU

Chapter Summary

superhero cat shifter au woow written in may of 2022

Tommy sat on the hard wood bench. A crick in his neck already starting to ache, but he didn't want to raise his head. It was easy to stare at the ground. He could ignore the world. His feet kicked out absently, his new sneakers a tiny bit scuffed but Tommy didn't mind. He didn't like them anyways. His foster parents really liked 'color theory' and the bright neon yellow shoes were ugly. Ponk said they were lemon yellow but Tommy called them barf yellow.

The only sound was the clock ticking past high above Tommy's head. Nobody spoke. The social worker next to Tommy shifted, and Tommy's foster parents were waiting out in the hallway. There was supposed to be a fourth person in the room. And the judge at the stand gave a long worn out sigh, "it seems like it's a no-show."

The social worker stood up, "your honor, I'm sure he might be running late."

The judge leveled the woman a hard look. "If this man truly wanted to take care of his nephew, then he would've been here already."

Tommy's tail nervously curled around the leg of the chair, and if he would get nagged by the social worker he would've pulled his legs up and crouched on the seat. It would've been a lot more comfortable than sitting on the hard wood. Tommy ducked his head lower, a curtain of hair falling into his face to hide the scowl.

He is 'in-de-pen-dant' and he didn't need people watching over him.

There was a slight commotion at the door, and it opened. And the last person Tommy ever wanted to see walked in, adjusting his lime green hoodie with a guilty smile on his face. "Your honor, I am so sorry," Uncle Dream breathed out, breathless. "Traffic was a nightmare."

"You should've planned that out ahead of time," the judge said with a scowl. "But while we are here, let's get this done and over with. I do not tolerate people wasting my time."

Dream's floppy ears perked up, and Tommy scowl get bigger as Dream's poofy dog tailed wagged back and forth happily. Dog hybrids were fucking awful. Tommy hated them. Dream especially.

People always took dog hybrids for granted. With their big eyes and floppy tails, they pretended to be idiots. But in reality, they were fucking awful. They were great actors. People ate up the puppy eyes and the soulful looks, ignoring the red flags everywhere.

Cat hybrids, on the other hand, got a bad rep. Everybody thought they were evil incarnate. Which made life a lot harder when Tommy was trying to beg on the streets. People called the police on cat's a lot more than a dog. And Tommy's own ears flattened to his skull when the judge pulled out Tommy's file.

"Now, it says here that you were Theseus' previous guardian, but you gave him up." The judge said critically, and Tommy hoped the man wasn't fooled by Dream's act.

Dream played the part well of a mourning dog. His ears fell and his tail curled, looking every bit of the actor he was. "At the time, I couldn't support myself and Theseus. It broke my heart to give him up to the state, and put him in the hands of wonderful people like you, but I wished I could've kept my family with me."

"And what changed this time?"

"I got a better job!" Dream's tail wagged as he perked up, "the hours are better, and I can work from home. I can finally support my nephew."

The judge hummed, and the social worker was eating up Dream's lies like it was candy. Tommy wanted to wretch when he saw the woman give Dream a sappy look. Fuck it. Tommy pulled his legs up and hugged them. His black tail curling around his leg. The social worker shot Tommy an irritated glance.

The judge was looking over some papers. And after Dream simpered and answered all of the questions, the judge turned to Tommy. "And how are you doing, son? How are you feeling about this? Going back to your uncle?"

Tommy sniffed, and opened his mouth. But the social worker jumped in, "Theseus has a regular habit of running away, your honor. He's always wanted to go back to his uncle. I think he is more than ready to go back with his family." The woman's hand clenched on Tommy's shoulder, keeping him still. A warning.

Tommy's eyes darted over to Dream and saw the same message in Dream's blue eyes. *Keep quiet.*

If Dream already got his claws in the worker, then Tommy never stood a chance. This whole thing was a fake. A ruse. Just so Dream could get his paws on Tommy.

Although that was the scary part. Tommy didn't know *why* Dream wanted him back. The man took Tommy's inheritance from his dead parents and kicked Tommy to the curb once he was done being useful. All the warning Tommy had was a social worker knocking on the door a week ago.

Tommy didn't have ten dollars to his name. He had a ratty backpack and two outfits to change into. And more often than not, Tommy found himself kicked out of homes just by *being* there. It wasn't his fault that people thought cat hybrids were evil. He is *aloof*.

But if Dream put in the effort to drag Tommy back into his clutches, he must've found something. He wanted Tommy to do something. Tommy didn't have a single clue as to what

Dream thought he could do.

It was terrifying. Maybe Dream was going to sell him to the black market or something. It wouldn't surprise Tommy. Not with how much drugs he bought with Tommy's inheritance. Dream was either a crackhead, or a dealer of some kind.

It was over in twenty minutes. And soon, Tommy was ushered out of the room to say goodbye to his latest set of foster parents. Ponk and Sam were stood up when Tommy was pushed out of the room, the social worker still clasping a hand on his shoulder.

Tommy didn't sign any paperwork, but he had the feeling that he signed himself away to the devil.

"Say goodbye." The woman said curtly, and Ponk looked like he might start crying. To be fair, Ponk and Sam were decent. They went out of their way to invite Tommy into their weird hippy lifestyle. Organic foods and healthy dinners. Sam worked as a mechanic and he bought Tommy a lego set.

Tommy still had it in his backpack. The cardboard box worn but carefully taped up from the amount of times Tommy had dumped the pieces out to play with them.

Out of all of the foster parents had, these two were the most okay. And Tommy had a lot of them.

Tommy barely said a word as Ponk and Sam said their heartfelt goodbyes. Both of them knew that Tommy wasn't a very touchy person. And they kept their distance. That little kindness was enough for tears to actually form in Tommy's eyes.

A heavy hot hand landed on Tommy's shoulder. And he flinched. "Aww, it's okay buddy," Dream said, sickeningly sweet. "I know you'll miss them. But you're finally coming home, with me."

Tommy blinked, and Dream was shoving him down the hallway. He blinked again, and he was in the backseat of Dream's shitty car. The same one that Dream shoved him in after his parent's funeral. Tommy could smell the faint odor of sweat and dog. He leaned his forehead against the window, watching as the scenery flew by as Dream stole him away.

Again.

"What do you want?" Tommy asked, his voice raspy, but still audible above the hum of the car.

Dream's eyes flicked in the mirror. Catching Tommy's in a stare. "What do I want?" Dream repeated, sounding confused, "Tommy, is it too much to want to bring you back home?" His voice still sugary and fake. "I just wanted my pack finally together again. George says he misses you. Think of it, we can finally be a family again. It's that exciting."

Tommy didn't say a word. And there was a long pause.

Dream scoffed, breaking the silence, “you know, Tommy, you still have a shitty attitude. You better fix that before I fix it for you.” There it was. The threat.

Tommy was used to those. His forehead knocked against the window pane as the car bumped and rumbled. The city turned into suburbia. And Dream didn’t say another word as the car took dozens of turns until it stopped in front of a home.

The yard was dead, and full of weeds. And Tommy had thought he had seen the last of this place when Dream tossed him out. Tommy kept his ears pinned down as he got out of the car and followed Dream inside.

Looks like what little money Tommy’s inheritance was didn’t inspire Dream to renovate. Even though Tommy had spent a few weeks here before, the motions of moving and getting to a new house was the same. He kept his head down, scanning the rooms for any obvious threats.

Dream slammed the front door behind Tommy, and the cat flinched at the noise. “I would’ve thought you’d learn some manners by now.” Dream’s voice was soft and threatening. No longer sugary sweet and full of lies. “You’re what, ten?”

“Eleven.” Tommy replied, his ear flicking in irritation. Dream kicked him out four years prior.

“Don’t be sassy.” Dream snapped, “I asked you a simple question. And you’re giving me flack. You know what, I was going to do something nice tonight. The two of us going out and celebrating. But you’re being such a brat, Tommy.”

“Sorry.” Tommy whispered, keeping his eyes low.

Dream let out a low frustrated growl. And Tommy’s hackles rose, he tensed. Coiling up and ready to spring into action. And then Dream sighed, “you know what, this is giving me a headache. Shift.”

Tommy recoiled at the idea. His eyes finally left the floor and met Dream’s. “But-”

“Don’t-” Dream snapped, baring his teeth. “Fight me on this. Shift.”

Very few hybrids could actually shift into their animal form. There was a lot of puritan nonsense of the ‘genes have to be pure’ and shit. Usually only high class hybrids had the ability. People becoming bears, wolves, and other cool shit. And somehow Tommy drew the short end of the stick. Getting the rare gene mixed in. And despite all of that, Tommy became a kitten.

It was a mockery.

What Tommy would do to have big teeth and razor sharp claws to maul Dream right now. With a few moments of hesitation, Tommy set his backpack in a corner and shifted. His face screwing up with pain when the transformation took more energy than he had. He let out a

low whine, it hurt. He didn't have enough to eat today for this. After a few painful minutes he was a small black pile of fur gasping and twitching on the ground.

Dream's fingers picked Tommy up by his scruff, leaving Tommy limp and aching. His legs twitching as the muscles settled and bones popped into place. "There you go, kitty. Aw, you're still so small. I swear you haven't gotten any bigger since I saw you last."

Tommy tried to glare at Dream, but the man just looked down at him coolly. "Not even big enough to be skinned. Pity. Figuring who your daddy is, little half breed, I would've thought you'd be bigger." He wiggled Tommy up and down, laughing as Tommy tried to growl. "Don't worry, I'll take good care of you, Tommy. You are my golden ticket."

Tommy had to close his eyes as the world swayed as Dream moved. Taking him further into the house. Walking up a flight of stairs until Dream opened a door. It was the same pitiful bedroom that Tommy had used while he had been here last. Half of it was filled with boxes. And a small bedframe with a thin mattress was shoved up into the corner. Dream tossed Tommy onto the bed.

Tommy stumbled as his feet hit the covers, landing head first. His paws sank into the fabric as he tried to regain his balance. "You remember the rules, right kid?" Dream leaned up against the door frame. "Don't make a single sound. Come when I tell you to. And remember," Dream leaned in, a flat expression on his face, "be polite."

And then he left, closing the door behind him with a turn of a lock. Tommy couldn't get out of the room even if he miraculously had the energy to shift back. Which he didn't. It would take him a day or two before he could muster up enough effort to brave the pain.

Tommy shivered in the cold air. The window cracked slightly, letting in a small wisp of a breeze.

This was, by far, the worst home he had ever lived in. And Tommy had a bad feeling he was going to stay here for a long time.

The house was silent as a ghost. But the air was threatening and pushing Tommy down. Tommy was afraid of every noise he made. The soft thump when he jumped off the bed to sniff around the room. The creek of the floorboards. The sound of the air coming on through the vents. Tommy flinched at every sound. The faint smell of Dream was everywhere, and Tommy didn't feel safe here in the slightest.

He wished he was back at Sam's and Ponk's house. It smelled like lemons. And their dog, Fran, immediately adopted Tommy. It wasn't like Tommy shifted everywhere he went. No, he kept that a secret. He would just be labeled as a 'special kid' right next to the part in his file that said he ran away.

It wasn't intentional at first. Tommy liked to roam. But when life got insufferable as a human, being a cat and wandering the streets became more and more appealing. People gave him food all the time, and said nice things while petting him. Those same people always shot Tommy a judgemental look for being part cat.

At least people liked him in one form, or another.

Tommy dozed off a few times, curled up in a ball. And he woke with a start, three days into his stay, when he heard voices. A bark of laughter wafting up from the stairs. And somebody else laughing with Dream.

The door was cracked open, right next to a bowl that Dream had put in food. It made Tommy feel ashamed to be fed like the animal he was. But, at the very least, Dream hadn't pulled out the fucking collar. Tommy remembered what it was like to have a stupid bell jingling around his throat.

Tommy curled back up into a ball, trying to ignore the sudden sound when he heard Dream call for him. Tommy's tail curled back anxiously, but he reluctantly moved. It would be worse if Dream went to find him.

Tommy patted down the hallway and jumped down the stairs until he hovered, uncertain, in the doorway of the kitchen. A bottle of alcohol was open on the counter, and Dream was snickering to a familiar man. Tommy knew him vaguely. One of Dream's drug suppliers.

"There he is," Punz grinned greedily as he spotted Tommy cowering. "Your little money maker. You know you could just keep him and use him to keep the pests down."

"I don't have mice," Dream shot back, his face flushed from the drinks he had.

"You have roaches." Punz pointed out, "same difference."

Tommy made a face at the idea of hunting down and killing *roaches*. The crunch of biting into them would be the worst thing ever. If Dream told him to eat them Tommy would starve. "Pspsp," Dream wiggled a finger at Tommy to come closer. "Come here, I just wanted to show you off."

Tommy slunk into the room. His ears pinned back and his tail down. And Dream bent over and scruffed him, pulling Tommy high up in the air. "Do you see it?"

"He looks like a cat." Punz said, squinting at Tommy.

"He got that from his bitch of a mother." Dream swayed slightly, and Tommy narrowed his eyes at the insult. His mom was *the best woman ever*. "I never liked her. A plain tabby cat, when my brother could've had something so much better. But look, he has some spots."

The spots were barely visible under the black fur. Tommy knew what he looked like. But fur patterns were strange and stupid. He was a blonde as a human, yet as a cat he had black fur. At least he kept his blue eyes. His mother's furr pattern had been a tabby, with brown stripes that went up and down her long lithe tail. And his father had been a black lab. Tommy assumed that's where he got his fur color from.

"Yeah, I can see it now." Punz reached over to brush Tommy's fur, but Tommy batted at his hand.

Dream shook him like a dog. Leaving the world spinning. “Manners.” Dream barked, and Tommy let out a weak meow. “Although it doesn’t surprise me,” Dream bit out, “you got your bitchiness from your mom. I wondered how I could be related to a little brat like you, Tommy. And it turns out I was right. We aren’t.”

What? If Tommy wasn’t curled in a tight little ball, he would do it again. He wished the ground would swallow him up whole. Dream’s grip grew tighter on his scruff, almost on the edge of painful.

Dream continued to ramble on, nonsensically, “imagine my surprise when I was cleaning out my attic when I found a box of your mother’s stuff. I was going to junk it all but a letter caught my attention. And it was addressed to your *real* father. That’s right. Exdee wasn’t your dad. Your mom whored herself out right before the wedding, and my spineless brother decided to raise you as his. Like that did any good for him. He’s still *dead*. ”

Dream’s rank breath washed over Tommy’s face. And he winced as the smell of alcohol invaded his nose. Tommy barely bit back retching.

“Exdee always was a goody two shoes. But I would’ve drawn the line at raising another man’s bastard. Your mom had the paternal test but never sent it. At least she did something worthwhile in her life, getting knocked up by a rich man.”

Punz lifted up a glass in a mock toast, “the richest man, to be exact.”

“Stupid bitch thought you’d have a better life away from the money.” Dream spat, “she could’ve had everything she wanted. But hey, her loss is my gain. All I had to do was send the letter off with her stupid little confession in it and bring you back home. Already got contacted by Minecraft’s assistant.”

Minecraft? What?

Tommy knew that name. Hell, everybody did. They weren’t kidding when they said it was about the richest man alive. The news was always talking about him or his two kids. Tommy began to breathe faster. He was one of those elite people who was born into money, and Philza Minecraft turned a fortune into a monopoly. A smart businessman who had his finger in every corporate pie out there.

And Dream was saying that Tommy was *related* to this guy?

What a load of shit.

Dream began to swing Tommy around. And Tommy wiggled uncomfortably, the world beginning to spin around again. He didn’t expect for Dream to actually *toss* him though. The myth about cats always landing on their feet was true. Tommy twisted instinctively until his paws hit the ground. The myth about the landing being soft and comfortable was sadly not true. One of his legs hit the ground hard. And Tommy yowled in pain.

“Get out of here.” Dream drew back a foot and tried to kick at Tommy. But he didn’t have to say it twice. Tommy turned tail and ran, holding his injured leg up and scurrying away. His

paws sliding on the fake tiles. Dream barked loudly, making Tommy jump in fright in his escape.

Punz and Dream laughed behind him, and Tommy didn't stop until he climbed up the stairs and curled himself under the bed frame. Wheezing, Tommy couldn't stop the terror that ate him up inside. He had been manhandled. And his neck hurt from where Dream had gripped it.

Dream was lying drunk. Making things up. That's what he did. He always lied. Whatever real scheme he had for Tommy, he wouldn't stick around for it. If Dream thought somebody as savvy as Minecraft would fork over cash because of some wild claim, Tommy didn't want to be here to see it crumble into dust. It would fail.

Tommy would wait until Dream left or something and he'd sneak out. Living on the streets was better than this shit. He'd just have to be extra careful. Tommy's face is well known to the police as a runaway.

Tommy would rather live as a cat, but staying in his animal form was dangerous. The more time he spent as a cat, then it was harder and harder it was to turn back into a human. And the thought of being trapped in a tiny fur body frightened him.

Still, it would be better than being thrown around like a dog toy.

Tommy stayed under the bed for the rest of the night. It felt safer in the small dark space. But unable to fall asleep. Too scared to see what happens next.

Planning an escape takes time. Time, that apparently, Tommy didn't have. The next morning Dream walked into the room with a pair of sunglasses on, tossing a pile of clothes on the ground. "Shift and get dressed, and don't take too long."

Tommy crawled out from under the bed. His front leg still ached when he put pressure on it. And he smelled the clothes cautiously. He hadn't seen these before. And they smelled like the store still.

New clothes?

Still, Tommy didn't want to make Dream angry. He focused on shifting, but he had spent a couple days in his cat form. It was difficult. The instinctive sensation difficult to find and Tommy couldn't stop the panic that formed in the ball of his stomach. What if he couldn't shift? What if he couldn't-

And then his bones began to ache as the shift began to happen. Slower than normal. And the pain was drawn out. His ribs breaking and growing at a snails pace. His muscles reforming and shifting, contorting at odd angles until Tommy was lying in a pool of his own sweat, shaking and tired.

He still wore the stupid outfit the social worker told him to wear. And he hated it. Gingerly he picked himself up. The world swaying back and forth as he stood up.

Tommy pulled off the shitty clothes and pulled on the ones Dream threw at him. The clothes were... nice. Surprisingly so. Tommy hadn't expected this. This was some sort scheme Dream was doing, but Tommy couldn't muster enough energy to think about it. His head hurt and he stumbled down the stairs.

Dream was waiting for him. A pinched expression on his face. "You'd think your superpower was being fucking slow. You sure you aren't a sloth hybrid?"

"Sorry," Tommy said, hoarsely.

"Sorry, what?" Dream paused, giving Tommy a harsh look.

"Sorry, Uncle Dream." Tommy licked his lips and didn't meet his eyes.

"Good." Dream nodded, "get in the car. We can't be late. And you taking your time isn't helping." He pulled open the front door and Tommy trailed behind him. Keeping his head down. The car was like a sauna, even though the morning was only just beginning. And Tommy picked at the long sleeved shirt, already feeling sweat beginning to bead down his neck.

"Here," Dream tossed a waterbottle and a granola bar at Tommy, "and buckle up. Click it or ticket, brat."

Tommy pulled the fraying buckle across his shoulders and picked up the waterbottle. It was warm, but Tommy didn't care. He didn't eat last night, Dream had been too drunk with his buddy to even put the food in the shitty bowl. And he sucked down the water and granola bar in what felt like two breaths.

Tommy didn't say a word. Watching as Dream drove, the radio talking in the background. The scenery flew by. And Tommy noticed that Dream was taking him further into the city.

"-superhero Corvus was spotted earlier today putting out a fire, saving a dozen lives. Reports say that it was an untreated gas leak. Due to Corvus' timely appearance, the fire was brought under control." The radio lady spoke on the air. "Isn't that great Paul?"

"Of course!" The man, Paul, gushed, "we owe so much to our heroes that protect us. What with numerous villains around the corner, heroes are the people we can rely on. In fact, just the other day-" Dream reached over and turned the radio off.

The silence was grating after that. Tommy shifted in his seat. And finally, he mustered up a small amount of courage.

"Uncle Dream?" Tommy curled his tail around his leg nervously.

"Don't distract me while I'm driving." Dream shot back, and then irritably asked, "what?"

"Where are we going?"

Dream let out a long sigh, "we have a meeting with the Minecraft assistant. They flew out to get a paternity test done. And if you are not on your best behavior, I *will* skin you alive."

Tommy shied away from looking at Dream. His ears pinned back. And he didn't say another word the entire car ride. The city was bustling around them, and Dream parked in an empty spot in front of a fancy clinic.

There were normal clinics, which were in regular buildings and shit. But then there was *boozy* places. Tall windowed glass rose above Tommy's head. There were *sculptures* in the front. If that wasn't a sign that this was out of Tommy's ballpark, it was the fact that there a *starbucks* in the lobby. This place was for the rich.

Even wearing new clothes, Tommy felt out of place. Dream didn't seem bothered. Instead, he donned his fucking puppy dog mask and ushered Tommy inside. A hand on Tommy's back to guide him steadily to the front desk.

A woman with lamb ears looked at Dream with a thinly veiled amount of disgust. His outfit was dirty and wrinkled, but Dream didn't look bothered. But Tommy felt his hand tighten against his back.

"How can I help you?" The woman asked, disinterested.

"I have a meeting with," Dream checked his phone, "Eret? Eret Majesty? We have an appointment with them."

The woman actually perked up. "Oh?" She typed on her keyboard quickly. "Name?"

"Dream Taken."

"And the kids name?"

"Theseus Innit."

"Relation?"

"Uncle."

There was a few more keystrokes, so quickly it sounded like falling rain on the roof of a car. And then the woman stood up, "follow me, please."

Dream's hold didn't waver as the woman led them through the hallways. The place smelled obnoxiously of cleaner. And Tommy's nose wrinkled as it was assaulted. Dream's grip got tighter and he leaned in to hiss, "behave."

The woman led them to a door, and opened it. Allowing Dream to push Tommy in. It looked like a living room than a fucking doctors office. And sitting on a seat was the assistant. Long legs covered in fancy trousers that Tommy was certain cost more than his inheritance was, Eret Majesty was typing away on a tablet.

They looked up when the door opened. A polite smile gracing their face. "Hello," Eret stood up. "It's wonderful to meet you. Dream, I presume?"

“Yes,” Dream took Eret’s hand and gave it a shake. “I am so thankful you came all the way out here for this. I didn’t know what to do.”

Eret tilted their head, brown curling hair falling into their eyes. “I have to say, this isn’t common for me either. But I hope you don’t mind that we need to double check the claim that Philza is his father.”

Dream shook his head, keeping a dopy happy expression on his face, “no, it’s totally understandable. I would want to double check things just in case if I were in his shoes too.”

“Great.” Eret smiled, and turned to Tommy, “so you are the lucky boy.”

Tommy would not call himself lucky at all. He’s a *black cat*. That is, by far, the unluckiest thing in the world. He nodded, looking down at the ground. Unsure how to react. Dream could take anything as an insult.

“Don’t mind him, he’s shy.” Dream patted Tommy on the back, “it’s been hard on him since his parents passed. I can only do so much for him.”

“Oh, I am so sorry for your loss.” Eret said sympathetically.

Fuck off. Tommy hated the sympathy. His irritation must’ve shown and Dream’s grip on his arm grew tighter. “Thanks.” Tommy folded like wet cardboard, even though he hated it. But that appeased Dream.

“I’ll call in the doctor. I hope you don’t mind if I stay in the room during this. I need to double check there isn’t any tampering.” Eret tapped on the tablet, before tucking it under his arm. “Why don’t you sit down?”

“Sure. It’s not a problem.” Dream waved the concern off, “we totally understand. People have probably tried to trick you before.” Dream lead Tommy to sit down next to him on the couch.

“Many, many times.” Eret said in a dry voice, “although your case is unusual because it already came with a valid paternity test. Although a bit old, it was enough to investigate this matter.”

Dream nodded, “my sister-in-law was a strange one. I don’t know why she never sent that letter. I found it while I was going through some of her old things. I felt it was important to send it. Every man deserves to know he has a child. Even if Mister Minecraft decides he doesn’t want to care for Tommy, at least he knows about him.”

What an absolute load of bullshit. The amount of fake sweet lies Dream was telling made Tommy want to hurl. Eret paused at Dream’s words, and was about to say something when the door opened.

Tommy knew that he was in some kind of rich hospital place. But it was a sign that the doctor looked well rested and put together that this was *really* a rich place. Most doctors Tommy had

seen were always tired and messy. Always ready to move at a moments notice for their many patients. But this guy looked like he spent three hours on his hair alone.

Fucking rich people.

Tommy had never felt so out of place before.

“Let’s get started,” the doctor said, with a plastic smile. He looked at Tommy, “I hope you aren’t afraid of needles, son.”

Tommy, in fact, *was*. “I- I thought it was a cheek swab?” That’s what all the movies and advertisements did. Tommy knew they had to get a bit of his saliva and shit. That didn’t need a fucking *needle* .

“We will get more accurate results with a blood test.” Eret spoke up. And Tommy’s heart lurched in his chest.

“I- I don’t like-” Tommy’s ears pinned back and his tail flicked nervously. Dream wrapped a hand around his wrist.

“It’ll be okay.” Dream says, patronizingly. The two other adults in the room didn’t pick up on it. “I’ll hold your hand the entire time, Tommy.”

Translation: I will pin you down and force you to get a needle in your arm.

Tommy’s shoulders rose up in fear. And he couldn’t look at the doctor. Instead he held an arm out and waited. The cool touch of a alcohol swap touched his skin, and he flinched.

“So Theseus, or would you prefer Tommy?”

“Um. Tommy.” Tommy fidgeted, looking everywhere but at Eret.

“Tommy. It’s lovely to meet you.” Eret smiled warmly at him, “do you have any hobbies? Are you in any clubs at school?”

Dream squeezed Tommy’s shoulder. “Tommy is being homeschooled.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, but he’s a bright lil guy.” Dream beamed with pride. And Tommy squeezed his eyes to prevent himself from vomiting right then an there. There was a sharp pain as the needle pressed into Tommy’s arm. And he let out a soft whine.

“Aww, it’s okay buddy.” Dream said softly, “you’re almost done.”

Tommy hated him. He hated Dream with a passion. How can he pretend to be like this when he’s a true piece of garbage? Tommy shivered, and he resisted curling into a ball. If he moved then the needle could hurt him even more.

“Do you have a favorite subject, Tommy?” Eret asked, and Tommy didn’t answer until Dream tapped his fingers on his shoulder.

“Uh,” Tommy blinked, trying to think up an answer. “I like, uh. Music?”

“Oh, do you play an instrument?”

“No. Music theory.” Tommy swallowed. It had been his favorite class. But the chances of him going back to his school was very slim. Dream hadn’t mentioned that Tommy could go to school again. And if this scheme didn’t work out, like always, then Dream might kick him out. The foster system was quick to move on, and the likelihood of Tommy going back to Ponk and Sam was very little.

Then the pain ebbed, and a piece of gauze was put on his arm over the wound. “You’re done.” The doctor said, “it wasn’t that bad, now was it?”

It was the worst thing ever. But Tommy shook his head. “I’ll go take this over to the lab, and I’ll have a nurse bring you the last bit of paperwork.” The doctor said, and then he turned to Eret, “we’ll send you the results later tonight. Is there anything else I can help with?”

“No,” Eret stood up, “I think I’m finished here. How about I buy you two a drink at the starbucks,” Eret brushed off their fancy clothes. “Are you two allergic to anything? Any preferences?”

“I’m fine with anything unless it has mangos.” Tommy reluctantly answered after Dream tapped him. “I’m allergic to those.”

Eret nearly dropped their tablet. Fumbling as it slipped out from under their arms. Turning a shocked look at Tommy. “Excuse me?”

Tommy didn’t like that. His tail curling anxiously around his leg. Eret’s attention on him made himself nervous.

“Don’t mind him,” Dream chuckled, “he’s shy. I think we can pass on those drinks. We need to get going soon. Tommy has some homework to do still.”

“Yeah.” Tommy agreed. He could feel the hairs on his neck starting to rise from Eret’s stare. “I’m behind on my math.”

“Here,” Eret held out a slim white card to Tommy, “take this. Call me if you ever need any help.”

Tommy gingerly took the card. The paper was smooth and creamy between his fingers, and all it held was a line of numbers. No name or anything. He shoves it in his pocket. “Thanks.”

“I mean it, Tommy.” Eret caught Tommy’s eyes, “call me. Even if you need somebody to listen. I’m free.”

Dream clapped a hand on Tommy’s back, “well, this has been lovely. But we really got to leave. I need to make it back home in time for my shift at work.”

“I’ll call you later,” Eret nodded, and Dream guided Tommy out of the room with his heavy hand.

Tommy glanced behind him, and Eret was still looking at him. A confused, but pondering look on their face. And he shivered.

He didn’t like this at all.

Phil sat on the couch, with a loud sigh. His heavy gear still on, and it stuck to him as the days sweat and hard work accumulated. Leaving the layers of kevlar and leather to cling to him. Still, he had to make an appearance. Else people would get the wrong idea. It was easy to rescue those in need. But he was done pandering to the public. At least, for one night.

His phone buzzed. And Phil pulled it out of his secured pocket and tugged his hat off at the same time. His sweaty hair fell into his face, but that wasn’t what he wanted to free. His fucking ears hurt after a while.

Nobody suspected the known avian hero Corvus was a panther hybrid. Let alone one of the most popular men on the planet. Sure, Phil flaunted that he funded Corvus’ operations. The goofy billionaire who tended to party too hard and made the front news wasn’t the cold and serious hero that swooped through the sky.

The faux wings were a bitch to use. But they weren’t as heavy as they used to be. The first prototype would nearly throw Phil’s back out from the weight. But after countless hours of research and a couple million dollars had slimmed them down into form fitting and light weight materials that still allowed him to fly.

Eret’s name flashed on his screen, and Phil took the call. “What.”

“Code periwinkle,” was all Eret said.

And the breath in Phil’s lungs vanished. He sat up, leather creaking from the sudden movement. “What?”

“Congratulations, it’s a boy.” Eret said, with a touch of dry humor.

“Excuse me?” Phil spluttered, “I haven’t- not in a long time, Eret. I couldn’t have had another kid.”

“Well, eleven years ago somebody got lucky.” Eret replied, “because you have a sparkling little new boy.”

“*Eleven.*” Phil couldn’t remember what he *ate* that day. Let alone what happened more than a decade ago. “And they’re only just now coming forwards?” Most women tried to contact Phil as soon as they found out they were pregnant. Unfortunately for all of them, Phil was far too busy to meet them let alone anything else.

Like always, they were hoping to get a free shot at his money.

“Apparently the mother kept it a secret, and after she passed her brother in law found the evidence and sent it in.” Eret replied, “I went and overlooked the paternity test. You are one hundred percent this kids father.”

“I have another kid.” Phil breathed out, stunned. “I- why didn’t you tell me this sooner?”

“And what? You hover around anxiously until I tell you that it was another trick? I thought it was just another scheme until the kid said he was allergic to mangos.” Eret snorted. “Your obnoxious allergy got passed on.”

“He’s allergic to mangos.” Phil repeated the words like a prayer. The first thing he knew about his new kid was *allergies*. His allergy. But he soaked the information up happily. “I- what is his name?”

“Theseus, but he likes to go by Tommy. Eleven years old, and a spitting image of you.”

“Me?” Phil’s gloved hand covered his mouth to hide the giddy smile forming on his face. “Do you have any pictures?”

“I’ve sent you the file I made on the kid. He gets in about as much trouble as you do, Phil.”

Phil lunged for his tablet. Fumbling for the password and unlocking it. And sure enough, an email titled ‘Theseus Innit’ sat in his inbox. Phil skipped past the confirmed paternity test, instead scrolling down until he found a picture of the boy.

He was young, perhaps five or six in the picture. Sitting on a lap of a woman Phil vaguely recognized. A bright grin on his face as he held up a fish to the camera. A fishing pole discarded to the side.

Eret was right. Tommy looked almost exactly like Phil. His ears were the shape of his mothers, a tabby cat, rather than the rounded ones that Phil had. But that seemed to be the end of differences.

“You said his mother died?” Phil asked, distracted as he drank in the sight of his kid. *His* child. A son he never knew about.

Prime, he missed so much. He was eleven years old now, and Phil could’ve been there. He could’ve taken care of Tommy, watched him as he grew up into the brilliant child he was now.

If the woman was alive, Philza would’ve ruined her for keeping Tommy away from him. Already he could feel the rage start to form in his stomach. The same type of deadly wrath that resulted in a dead villain laying at Phil’s feet. She kept his son away. From *him*.

“Yes, a car crash with her husband.” Eret replied, “four years ago. His uncle was selected to take care of him, but he gave Tommy up to the state a few weeks afterwards, citing it was too much effort to take care of him.”

Phil would’ve. In a heart beat he would’ve *jumped* at the chance to take care of Tommy. The bright little boy who grinned with the brightness of the world. A little kit. The cub of his

pride. He had been seven years old when he was given to the state.

The final picture was at Tommy's seventh birthday party, a crooked vanilla cake with seven candles bright as Tommy stood up on his chair, a happy grin on his face, leaning over to blow them out. That was the last one in the file. Stolen from his deceased parents facebook, no doubt.

Four years were missing. No pictures. Only a few lines of being transferred from home to home, and the file the social worker made for him. Trouble maker, bad attitude, a penchant for swearing, and a flight risk.

"His uncle took him back in." Phil coolly said, "a week ago."

"Makes sense. He'd want money." Eret said, "he took the inheritance and booted the kid out as fast as he could. He acted like he had been raising Tommy the entire time during the test."

"Thoughts on him?"

"Scum," Eret replied.

"Won't put up much of a fight. He'd fold easily." Phil hummed, "and what about Tommy?"

"He's... shy. Polite. But very quiet." Eret sighed, "and very frightened."

Phil asked, "you have the recording of the meeting? I want to see it."

"I only made a voice recording. My apologies."

"It's fine. I want that sent to me. Contact my pilot, I want the jet to be ready and on the tarmac by the time I'm there. I want to meet him tomorrow morning."

"One flight to Logstedshire, coming up." Eret hummed, "should I let the pilot know if there will be more than one person coming?"

"I couldn't keep them out of the loop even if I tried, mate." Phil sighed, and there was a weight behind Phil on the couch.

"Keep who out of what?" Wilbur blinked lazily at his father.

All thoughts of having a peaceful nap at home vanished long ago. But it looked like Wilbur had a nice nap after his shift. Phil smiled at his son, reaching up and running a hand through Wilbur's hair, his eldest leaning into the touch. "We're going to go pick up your brother."

"Techno? He's in his den."

"No," Phil purred happily, his tail excitedly flicking back and forth just saying the words, "your new little brother, Tommy."

Dream seemed to be happy. Tommy couldn't read him sometimes. He could easily hide behind the mask of a happy go lucky mutt. But switch like a flick of a dime. Dream turned the radio on the drive home, humming to the songs. His tense shoulders were gone.

He didn't say another word to Tommy during the drive. Even as Tommy slunk into the house on his heels, Dream didn't even glance at him. Leaving Tommy to scamper up to the small room and sitting on the bed.

Dream's good mood is going to be horribly ruined when that paternity test comes back negative. Tommy grabbed his backpack from where Dream had tossed it and went through it all. He had prepared long ago a bag for escape. And Tommy was tempted to just go *now* before Dream could turn his anger on him.

Tommy still remembered how bad Dream could really get. Tommy kept him up with his crying one night after his parents funeral and-

There is a reason why Tommy hates small spaces.

His escape attempt was ruined when Dream called for him to come down. And Tommy reluctantly put his backpack behind the door and slunk down the hallway.

"Tommy," Dream gave him a smile, which only put Tommy on edge more. "I'm thinking about ordering take out. As a celebration. You don't mind chicken, right?"

"It's... good." Tommy cautiously agreed. He's a cat hybrid. Of course he loves chicken. Dream nodded and went back to his phone. Tommy edged towards the door, but Dream snapped his fingers.

"Stay."

Tommy was rooted in his spot. Waiting until Dream was done, his tail nervously curling around his leg. "Sit down, will you?" Dream sighed, "I'm not going to do anything. I just wanted to have a little chat before you disappear for the night."

Tommy crossed the room on light feet, not daring to turn his back on Dream, cautiously sitting on the couch. After a few more moments, Dream finished up ordering and put his phone down.

"So," Dream smiled, "how are you?"

"What?" Tommy's ears pinned back.

"Is it wrong to ask my nephew how you're feeling?" A dangerous glint in Dream's eyes spurred Tommy to shake his head.

"No, uh. Sorry, Uncle Dream. I was just surprised." Tommy mumbled, "I'm fine."

"And?"

"What?"

“You’re supposed to ask me how I’m feeling, Tommy.” Dream said flatly.

“Sorry. How are you Uncle Dream?” Tommy’s voice cracked, and he knew that Dream would get angry. He always did. Especially when Tommy messed up.

“I’m okay.” Dream replied, and then leaned back in his chair. “I figured we should get to know each other. You’re going to be spending a long time with me in the future, so we might as well have a chat.”

“A- a long time?” Tommy was confused.

Dream snorted, “you clearly got your mother’s intelligence. You’ll be staying here until you’re an adult, kid. Your father won’t want to deal with a bastard. But out of the goodness of my heart, Tommy, I’ll take you in. Raise you like you’re my own.”

“My dad is dead.” The words slipped out unintentionally, and Tommy flinched at his own voice. “I’m not- I mean- I’m sorry, Uncle Dream.”

Dream laughed, a cold look in his eyes. “It’s fine. It’s hard to think that you’re the spawn of the jackass that rules the country. I get where you’re coming from. But don’t talk back to me like that again, kid.”

“Yes, Uncle Dream.” Tommy fidgeted again, “I uh, I didn’t know that Philza Minecraft, uh, did that?”

Dream laughed again, but it was softer. “You’re finally picking up on stuff. Look at you, learning.” He said patronizingly, “yeah, most of the public see him as a ‘philanthropist’ and shit. But the underside of the world knows not to cross with him. He’s fucking brutal. You just look at him funny, he’ll ruin you. And it won’t cost him a dime. And the heroes he controls are the same. They’re all criminals but the public adore them. They just cover up the shit they do.”

“Oh.” Was all Tommy could say. That did sound dangerous. And cruel.

“Welcome to life, Tommy. The world is shit, and it only gets shittier when you have bills to pay.” Dream extended his arms out, waving dramatically. “Might as well try and bleed others dry while you can, or else you’ll end up like my brother. *Dead.*”

The doorbell rang. “Food’s here. Grab the door,” Dream said, “and *don’t* give them a tip. They don’t deserve it. Uber can eat my ass.”

“Okay, Uncle Dream.” Tommy said, practically launching himself off the couch just to escape the conversation. Even though he had been sitting on the couch and just talking, he had the harrowing feeling like he just escaped with his life.

Well, screw Dream. Tommy grabbed a handful of coins from the bowl next to the door, and even though it was a pittance, it was still a fucking tip. He opened the door, and blinked at the shadow looming over him.

A man stood on the doorstep. Wearing a suit that was probably more expensive than the one that Eret had been wearing earlier. The smell of cologne was overpowering. Like he had just bathed in it. His white shirt was unbuttoned, showing off a shark tooth necklace peeking out from behind the cloth. And Tommy was struck with a sudden situation that he had never considered before.

What do you do when a supervillain is staring down at you?

“Hello, kid.” Schlatt stared down at Tommy with a fascinated hungry look, “heard you found out who your real daddy is today. Isn’t that just fuckin’ great? Lotsa people are just... *dying* to see you.”

The coins slipped out of Tommy’s hands and clattered to the ground.

Phil’s leg bounced. The plane ride had been long. And when Eret picked him up, along with his two boys who refused to stay behind, that had also been an eternity. The city of Logstedshire was a small one, only on the map because of a single corporation that paid well for the area. It had started off as a coal town, and when the mines eventually dried up, it moved onto other ways of making a business.

There were very little things that made Logstedshire an interesting city. Phil moved fairly new recruits or troublemakers to watch over the city. It was in the middle of nowhere. And it was beyond average.

No truly evil villains spawned from this area. In fact, the worst villain had been the local drug cartel which the police ended up busting two years prior. There was simply nothing about it that made it interesting.

Except for one Theseus “Tommy” Innit.

He bounced around over twenty homes in the past four years. Digging into more of the social worker files, at least, Wilbur did, Phil could see the interviews with the couples who gave Tommy up. Foolish, stupid people who couldn’t see past their noses at the literal gold that had been given to them.

More often than not, it was cited that Tommy was ‘stubborn, difficult to talk to, and impossible to keep an eye on.’

They could all read between the lines. Most people didn’t like cat hybrids. Tommy had also been picked up by the police on five separate occasions after being reported as a run away. The furthest he ever got on the streets was a month before there would always be an anonymous report of a black cat stalking an area they shouldn’t be in.

There was a single picture in the file from a police report. Two years prior, after spending a month on the street, he was photographed like a real criminal. Holding up an inmate sign to the camera.

Phil nearly broke the tablet in his hands when he saw it. The bright little light in his kit's eyes was gone. And although he had grown a few inches, he was smaller than before. His hair matted and his eyes dull-

That was *his son*.

It took everything Phil had to calm down. He silently took down the arresting officer's name, they would be out of the job before the week was over. Anybody who treated his son, or any child, like they were a criminal like this would not survive. Phil would do a massive overhaul of the police force here.

Nobody would go unscathed by this.

It would be poetic if they got a taste of their own medicine. They could frame it like a sting operation, that the police forces in the city were heavily corrupt and most of them sent to jail. Perhaps a few would be true, but for the most part, innocent men and women would be finding themselves locked up. Just to get a taste of the injustice they forced his *innocent child* to experience.

Plans for revenge would come later.

Phil pushed them aside. He had other things to take care of. Mainly, meeting his son. He couldn't stop the excitement in his stomach at the very thought of it. Wilbur and Technoblade were fully grown, and they needed their own space. But Phil has missed doting on his children. They weren't little cubs anymore. Techno could pin Phil down on a good day, and it wasn't like Phil could force them into his den. Not when they grew into their own claws and teeth.

He has another chance. Another child to watch grow up and spread their wings to the world, but always returning home and to Phil. Tommy would need care. And Phil would dote on him. He wouldn't need anything anymore, Phil would give it all to him on a silver platter.

Wilbur knew how Phil was feeling. He was shifting in his seat along side of Phil. A fellow pride animal, a lion hybrid. Phil was a bit odd, since panthers were solitary animals. But he knew since he laid eyes on his first child that he wanted to be with them until the end.

Technoblade was the odd one out. Quietly sitting with his arms crossed, his white tail flicking absently. His face stony and impassive, but Phil could read the signs.

They were all anxious.

Phil sighed and set the tablet to the side. He needed to focus now. He slept a little on the plane, but too much excitement under his skin made him sleep uneasily. He ran a hand through his hair, mussing it up. It still fell in perfect silken waves, Technoblade wouldn't settle for anything less.

"How much longer?" Wilbur shifted back and forth, his heavy tail flicking anxiously.

“Just a few more minutes.” Eret said, glancing in the rear view mirror. The window separating the driver side and the back where three cats lounged was cracked slightly. “Should I send a message to the uncle to warn him we are a few minutes away?”

“No.” Phil said coolly, “I don’t want him to have time to hide anything.” And then he let out a calming breath.

He needed to be Philza Minecraft. Friendly, happy, and calm. A bit ditzy, but something familiar to Tommy. Everybody knew what Philza Minecraft acted like. A smile was pasted on his face. Goofy, but he let a tinge of his excitement show through.

He is going to meet his *kit* . How could he not be excited?

Tommy will be scared. Maybe nervous. But that is expected. Has his son ever met with other cat hybrids? Let alone big cats like them? He might be skittish, but Phil couldn’t wait to take him home.

There was so much Phil wanted to know.

What is Tommy’s favorite color? His favorite food? Did he enjoy movies? Or did Tommy enjoy reading books instead?

Phil wanted to see the look on Tommy’s eyes when he saw the house. A sprawling manor that had everything he could ever want. The look of awe and disbelief people wore when they looked upon the home Phil specially built.

He was lost in his idle fantasy when the flash of blue and red lights caught his attention. All three of the cats snapped their heads to see what was happening. Eret slowed the car, pulling to the side of the road.

Half a dozen police cars were flashing, surrounding a pitiful looking home. A crowd was standing around, milling as they were trying to figure out the drama. A news van was parked near the back, a woman standing in front of a camera.

The smile falls from Phil’s face.

“This isn’t a press leak.” Wilbur said, peering out the tinted windows.

“Eret.” Phil snapped out, “find out what happened.” It would be too crazy for Phil to show his face out there right now. The reporter would have a field day seeing Philza Minecraft in the dirtier part of town in front of what looked to be a crime scene.

Eret parked the car and got out, heading towards one of the policemen near the line of tape that sectioned the crowd away from the home.

“I found the airing news.” Technoblade tapping on his tablet. Even though they were only a hundred yards from it all, the three cats crowded around to see what the woman was saying.

“-came in earlier today from an uber driver who stumbled upon the grizzly scene. Police arrived shortly afterwards, and found that the homeowner, a golden retriever hybrid, Dream

Taken, had been killed. Police haven't firmly stated who might be the perpetrator of the heinous crime, but they have put out a warrant for the arrest of Dream's nephew. A black cat hybrid, Theseus Innit, who has been arrested several times before. If you see this suspect, please call in the hotline-" the video cut to the picture of Tommy. It wasn't a flattering picture, the boy sending a haughty glare at the camera.

"Turn it off." Phil hissed, and Techno clicked the tablet off.

How dare they. *How dare they* ? Tommy was *eleven*. A kit. And they're treating him like he was the criminal. Without any real evidence. Even if Tommy had killed his guardian, Phil wouldn't mind. But just the way they had sent the city into a manhunt for a *child* by omitting certain facts-

People will be losing their livelihoods by the end of the night.

Eret opened the front door of the car, a grim look on his face.

"Well?"

"Tommy is missing, and Dream has snake bites." Eret started the car, flipping it around so they could leave. "That means only one thing."

Fear coiled in Phil's stomach. This was worse than he had thought.

"Punz has been here." Technoblade spoke up. "And with him-"

"-the highest bidder." Wilbur finished. "Who else knows that Tommy is related to us?"

Phil sucked in a breath. Trying to calm his heart beat. He had so many enemies. Both as the billionaire and as Corvid. Although his identities were safe, it was still known to the public that Phil was the one who funded the hero organization.

"I'll look into the clinic." Techno was already tapping at his tablet again. And Phil wanted to join in. But rage blossomed in his heart. He had to unclench his hands from the tight fists as his claws slid out.

Tommy was *gone*. Taken.

The perfect meeting was ruined. His kit was missing. Somebody had leaked the news. Taken his kit before Phil could even *meet him* . He had lost eleven years already. And he couldn't stand another day. His cub is in danger.

Somebody was going to *die*.

This hadn't been the first time Tommy has been kidnapped. First time with a supervillain, that's for sure. But people liked to snatch kids off the street. The last time, Tommy had to drag some drugged up guy out with him and that had been a huge hassle. The fucker was beefy and a pain to haul out of the abandoned warehouse. Tommy had only been nine at the time, and he ended up pulling the guy by an arm until he hit a payphone.

This time, though. This time, Tommy was by himself and the main target.

The drugs were nice. They didn't like, make it feel like ants were crawling over his skin. So supervillains definitely splurge on the nice stuff. Tommy can barely recall how they took him, he was pretty sure he gave up pretty quickly when Schlatt was staring down at him.

Tommy might be a stubborn asshole cat. But he wasn't an *idiotic* stubborn asshole cat.

Although why the fuck a L'Manburg villain would be walking the streets of Logstedshire, Tommy didn't really know. Tommy had seen him on the news, battling with Alloy and raining destruction down. This wasn't some two-timer who picked up a shitty ski mask and decided today was a good day to ruin some infrastructure, Schlatt never hid who he was. And he was *dangerous*.

So of course Tommy would cower in a corner until the world got fuzzy and distant. A syringe stabbed into his leg, and yep- he's gonna feel that in the morning. If there *was* a morning.

Distantly Tommy recalled seeing the white hoodie that Punz wore as he was thrown over Schlatt's shoulder. Punz always seemed so sketchy to Tommy, he never knew why Dream liked him. But apparently they knew each other for a long time.

Words mushed together. Wow, the drugs were good. But Tommy could've sworn Schlatt said, "kill the-" and then the next thing Tommy knew he was slumping over in a backseat of a SUV.

He's never been in an SUV before. The seats were like... *leather*. Which was cool. Tommy recalled in vivid detail staring at the seats before things got all fuzzy. And the next thing he knew, he was stirring in a soft bed.

Yeah. A *real* bed. Not a shitty concrete floor. Tommy didn't have high expectations for this kidnapping experience but this was literally shooting it out of the water.

Tommy's hands were handcuffed in front of him. And there was a goon standing in the door who watched him. It was a bit foggy coming out of the drugs, but it didn't give him any bad after effects.

It was the *good shit*.

Tommy was pulled out of the bed and dragged down a hallway, stumbling over his socks as they slid on the ground. The fucker *stole* his shoes.

...you know what Tommy never liked them anyways. They were too obnoxiously yellow for Tommy's liking, the only thing that they were good for was comfort. They probably got tossed somewhere along the line.

The place seemed... nice. Not abandoned. Was this a real lair? Tommy had heard rumors, but he always thought that villains never actually *had* lairs. Nobody stupid enough would keep all their eggs in the same basket. But figuring Schlatt was the one who grabbed him, Tommy had to consider that Schlatt was that fucking extra.

Yeah, that made sense. A bit improbable but Tommy could see it.

Tommy was dropped into a chair and the goons stepped away, taking positions near the doorway. A wide desk was in front of Tommy, and slowly, the chair spun around.

Yeah, Schlatt was that extra.

This was a lair.

A thick cigar was clamped between his teeth, and Schlatt eyed Tommy up and down. His pupils were like a goats. Matching the curling horns that framed his bushy side burns.

“Let’s have a *chat*, Minecraft spawn.” Schlatt drawled, his nose flaring. “Bring him closer. What do you shits want me to do? Yell across the fucking room?” He gestured at the goons, and instead of picking Tommy up like any considerate person would, the beefy men grabbed the chair and effortlessly thunked Tommy only mere inches from the desk.

The smell of smoke and body spray was overwhelming. And Tommy was smart enough not to screw his face up in disgust. Schlatt leaned forwards. “We’re just gonna have a nice lil chat, kid. No need to shit yourself. Okay? Nod.”

Tommy hesitantly nodded. If a supervillain told you to fucking nod, you’d do it too.

“Great. Great,” Schlatt’s voice grew soft. At least, he wasn’t as gruff as before. “You ain’t ever met your ugly as fuck pops, yeah?”

Tommy nodded. If by ‘pops’ he was referring to Philza Minecraft, Tommy was going to fucking agree. Hell, he was going to nod to everything Schlatt says. Even though Tommy *knows* that the idea of Philza Minecraft being his father is ludicrous. It was a scheme Dream was trying to pull.

A horrible thought hit Tommy. If Schlatt grabbed him because he believed Philza was Tommy’s father, what would the villain do if he found out it was a lie?

Time to kiss some ass.

“You feelin’ okay?” Schlatt asked, and Tommy shyly nodded. His tail wrapping around his leg nervously.

“Good, you were out a bit longer than I thought you’d be. You hungry?”

Tommy paused, but hesitantly nodded. He was... kind of hungry. A little bit. He never got the chicken Dream ordered.

“Are you only gonna say yes to my questions?”

Tommy caught himself and then shook his head, and Schlatt laughed. Not cruelly, but like he was actually amused by it all. It was nothing like the cackle that Tommy had heard on the television when Schlatt was fighting on camera.

The sound eased the terror in Tommy's chest.

"Pretty scary, huh. Just living some normal life and suddenly people are tellin' you that you're related to the shittiest man alive. Now you're thrown into the business. I ain't sorry about that, kid." Schlatt said, and then gestured to one of the men, "oi, fucker. Bring us some drinks. How old are you, kid?"

There was a pause and Tommy had lurching in his stomach as he realized that Schlatt was waiting for him to answer. "Uh, eleven." Tommy shrank back. But Schlatt didn't seem angry.

"When I was your age, I was livin' on the streets." Schlatt mused, "you know, you and I aren't that different, kid. Except I didn't get all of my money handed to me on a silver plate, ya know? Except that's your daddy's money. Well," he paused, a wide grin on his face, "soon to be my money. Here is what is going to happen--"

A goon placed down two glasses on the desk. Both had ice and an amber liquid that smelled strongly like alcohol.

Tommy's stomach clenched at the thought of touching it. But it would be rude not to drink it. And that was the last thing Tommy wanted to do.

Schlatt glanced down at it and a scowl crossed his face, "what is this, fuck face? You'd think I'd give whiskey to a kid?" He picked up the second glass and poured into his cup, and then threw the empty glass into a wall. It shattered like gunfire. Spraying the shards everywhere. Parts of the glass had actually turned into powder due to the force.

Schlatt's super strength wasn't a lie, after all.

He was suddenly in the goons face, spitting with a fury, "you get this kid some, fuck I don't know, some *milk*. He's a fucking cat, idiot. They like milk. *Got it ?*"

The goon backed up and fled, and Schlatt ran a hand down his face. His thick fingers were covered in rings. None of them were made of iron, Tommy noted. It made sense, Schlatt hated Alloy, his heroic nemesis.

It would be fucking stupid to wear something his enemy could manipulate.

"Sorry about that," Schlatt sat back down calmly, like a switch had flipped he was back to his slightly less scarier version. "You like milk, right kid?"

Tommy shakily nodded.

"What I was going to tell you, before I was *interrupted*, is what gonna happen to you, kid. I don't take pleasure hurtin' kids. But I do hate your daddy. You can see my dilemma. If you were any of his other kids, I'd leave your body with your throat cut in a dumpster somewhere." The casual admittance of murder made a cold shiver run down Tommy's spine. "But I'm a generous man. I'm going to give your pops a long list of things to do. I've had my eye on a lotta things that were always just out of my price range."

Schlatt's eyes landed on Tommy, and the boy felt a paralyzing fear grab onto him. "All you need to do, kiddo, is just do what I say. Pose for a few pictures, maybe cry on command, and you can go on your merry little way back to your rich pops. I won't hurt a single hair on your head."

"But," Schlatt picked up the glass and took a long drink of it. Letting the word sink heavily in the air. "Your daddy is going to decide your fate. If he doesn't follow every letter, if he tries to cut *any* corners, I won't be the one to kill you." He caught Tommy's eyes in a dark stare, "I'm going to sell you one of his enemies who won't hesitate. Sorry kid," Schlatt smiled showing his teeth, "it's just business."

Tommy was screwed.

Like, sometimes he figures he has a chance at surviving the odds. But this? Right now? He didn't have the slimmest hope.

The second Schlatt figures out that Philza wasn't his father, and he picked up some random stray, Tommy was *dead*. Or worse, Schlatt would still sell him off and one of the buyers would have a lovely time skinning Tommy until his demise.

He was *fucked*.

There were videos in schools about 'what to do if a supervillain holds you hostage' and shit. Tommy had blandly sat in the crowd and felt his eyes fog over with boredom as a woman tells statistics on the bulky television. "If you are held hostage, you have a 97% survival rate if you listen to the villain and do what they tell you to do. The second you become more trouble than they expect, they will have an issue. Wait until heroes are on the scene, and you will come out unscathed. You need to sit, wait, and listen to orders."

Tommy *cannot wait*.

He couldn't wait the first time he was kidnapped either, he was pretty sure he was supposed to die while in that cell. But somehow he survived, and got the hell out of dodge. Well, more like he got sent to jail and shipped back to Logstedshire almost instantly.

But hey, he survived there by taking the situation into his own hands. He couldn't wait for heroes back then, and he certainly couldn't wait for them now.

Tommy had to fucking *go*.

His mind was whirling with shitty ideas. Like if he bit a goon and somehow got away in the chaos. No, that would probably end with him getting a black eye or something. His eyes kept hopping around the room, hoping to find something he could use. But there was nothing.

Schlatt stuck him in a chair and hold a newspaper with the date on it and took a few pictures. The goat villain said something about looking a bit sadder or some shit, but Tommy was feeling pretty miserable. He took a few pictures and then let the goons drag Tommy back to the room with the nice bed.

Figures the best kidnapping Tommy ever got was still pretty shitty.

If the richest man on the world got a message about some poor kid being held for ransom, what were the chances he'd actually do anything? Would Philza think this was some kind of hoax and ignore it? Leaving Tommy to fend the captors off? Although, he did have connections to the hero association. The man practically raised it from the ground up, citing the world needed people to protect it after Zero Day. The public supported him unanimously.

Would he just pass this on to some hero and call it good? Would he have any sympathy for some poor street cat? Philza was, despite a few good ideas occasionally, a fucking idiot. The man's twitter was mostly dedicated to a video game. He was a good business man, but hardly anything else.

Yeah, Tommy wasn't going to put his trust in that fool.

He was going to get out here. By himself. And he could do it. He knew he could. He just needed to find a convenient cat shaped hole to the outside and he'd be gone in a flash.

This would be easy.

Maybe.

[something should go here idk]

The second the ransom hit Phil's inbox, he was already on route. God, these pathetic villains think they are hot shit. Wilbur grew quiet when he saw the video, the Mad Goat laughing and making snide remarks. The camera turning to the small figure curled up on a chair.

Tommy was so much smaller than Philza ever imagined. A small black tail curled around his leg as he held up a shaking newspaper. His ears pinned back and he never made eye contact to the camera.

That was his *son*.

There was only a few seconds of video where Tommy, his son, his *cub*, was on. And then the Mad Goat was on the screen again. Gloating and giving out his demands.

Philza was always aware of his self control. But he couldn't help but feel the wood creaking underneath his hands, threatening to break. He released it. Dents in the wood remaining.

They liked to let villains have their little "hide outs." It was better to keep an eye on them rather than letting them flee at any given point. Wilbur had long since found the Mad Goat's main compound.

Phil wouldn't let his son stay there for a second longer than he had to.

He ignored the demands. The sneering talk. He put on his suit and felt the weight of it holding him down from ripping the man into pieces. Schlatt will not live another day. A

warning for the rest of the community. To never *ever* mess with one of Phil's boys.

He spent the entire short ride watching the clip of his son. The flinch his cub made when a knife was flashed in his direction. The way his ears sloped from sharp points- he didn't have the rounded ears that Phil sported. The baggy clothes that hung from his boney frame. He hadn't had enough food recently. The terrified look in his eyes-

Phil never wanted to see that again.

It only fueled his anger.

He let Wilbur and Techno leave the transport first. His sons were careful and well trained. Moving through the shadows towards Schlatt's hide out. Wilbur bending the metal away with only a thought, leaving a gap behind.

They would be quiet. Taking out Schlatt's men with ease. Phil did not have the restraint that they had. He would rip and tear-

It would only endanger Tommy.

So he stayed behind.

Phil stood in the empty vehicle, staring down at the photo of his son on the tablet. He looked remarkably like Phil did when he was that age. Young and bright eyed. But he had been beaten down. Again and again.

No more.

Phil took a deep breath from beneath his mask. The air filtration on the suit made the air sweet. Tommy was *here*. He had to wait. Just a little bit more. And then he can walk in to whatever dismal room they kept his cub in and whisk him away.

He could see it now. The awe and grateful looks his rescuee's had on their faces. Philza saved them from certain death. He could just see it. His son, terrified and lonely, looking up to find a hero, *Corvid*, in the doorway, ready to take him to safety. Reaching up with needy hands, begging to be rescued.

And Phil will oblige.

His hands itched at the thought of his cub in his arms. He was so small. In every photo he looked tiny. Tommy was eleven but he looked so much smaller than that. Did he have enough food growing up? How much would he weigh? Hardly nothing. But the knowledge of his own blood, his son, would be in his arms would make it the heaviest duty he ever carried.

His watch buzzed. His suit pinging with an unread message. It was Techno. Phil didn't even glance at the text. Already stalking out of the transport. The mechanical wings rising up high behind him.

He could feel his blood rushing. Like he had just won a hard battle, and yet, he was simply walking up the carefully tended lawn. Schlatt had always loved the fine things in life. It

didn't take a genius to know where he held up. A small manor outside of L'Manburg.

There was a hole in the side of the house. And Phil stepped in. His boots crunching under the bits of plaster and glass that decorated the floor. His heart thundered in his chest. Tommy wouldn't know, not for a long time, that it was his father who brought him out of this burning building. He wouldn't know the truth.

But Phil wanted to make a good first impression.

Eleven years. He had missed out on raising his cub for *eleven years*. So long, his son thought he was unwanted. Unloved. And Phil wanted to shower him in every bit of parental affection he could. Gone are the cold nights, alone and scared.

Tommy will be *happy* .

Philza barely paused when he found the main hallway of the manor filled with the unconscious bodies of Schlatt's men. Wilbur methodically pulling their arms back and zip tying their wrists together. Techno stood on guard. He pointed down a hallway, as a man sobbed under his boot.

Phil adjusted his course down the hallway. His heavy boots echoing down the luxurious and tacky floor. It was gaudy. Some men never did have taste. And Schlatt was one of them.

There was a door with a lock on it. Meant to keep somebody in, rather than out. And Phil barely paused. Running his suddenly sweaty gloved hands down the wood. Behind here. This simple door held his son.

The ease of which Phil plastered on a smile was familiar. It wouldn't been shown, his mask kept it hidden. But his body language followed suit. The tense and tight shoulders loosening, his hands turning so his palms were facing outwards, his head held high.

Like a hero would show.

The lock broke as he snapped it in half. Breaking down the door would only frighten his cub. And that would be the opposite of what Phil wanted.

The door swung open on squealing hinges. And Phil stepped in. His eyes burning. Scanning the room to land on his-

The smile dropped.

Phil's step faltered. His breath coming out in a puff of surprise. The room was simple. All it held was bed with tossed blankets on it. Nothing else. It was... empty.

Where was his son? Where is Tommy?

He took two quick steps and ripped the blanket off of the bed. As if it somehow hid a child beneath it. But it only revealed tattered sheets. There was nothing else here.

From beneath the mask, his voice echoed out in a low frustrated growl. And he spun on his heel, stalking out of the room like the predator that he was.

Wilbur looked up as Phil came back. His eyes bouncing around. Noting that Phil's arms were *empty*. "Is he-?"

"Not." Phil grunted out, the hair on his neck raising in seething *rage*, "*here*."

The man beneath Techno's foot whimpered, "I told you- I- I- I told you. The kid ran. He's gone. He's been missin' for an hour now. Please- I told you everything I knew. Schlatt went lookin' for him-"

Phil paced back and forth. His hands in tight balls. And then he stopped. Cold. Suddenly.

"Take care of the pests," Phil whispered, the voice modulator making his words hiss and pop, "I'll look for the *goat*."

He didn't glance behind him as Wilbur shrugged, and turned on the men at his feet. "You heard the man," Wilbur said, his voice easy and light, "we don't need you as props anymore. I wanted to at least look cool in front of the kid." And with a snap of his fingers, and there was a hollow *crack-crack-crack-pop!* as bones began to break and shatter.

Techno sighed, looking vaguely irritated. "Seriously?"

"What-?" Wilbur asked, and the response was gone as Phil stepped out of the manor. His wings stretching out wide like a vengeful angel.

Philza was going to find the son of a bitch who took his son, and he was going to fucking *rip their heart out*.

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Uhhh inspired by a "billy batson is actually related to bruce wayne" au. Except its sbi and they are villains pretending to be heros hell yeah.

- Tommy hits the streets and the press has framed him as murderer of Dream.
- Tommy goes "oh shit. Ooohh shit." so he doesn't go to the police. He just runs.
- This will piss Phil off. He wants son boy. Where is the boooy.
- There was something else here but i have lost my notes rip
- Tommy and Techno have already met. Techno got hit by some asshole villain and Tommy got yoinked off the street. Techno was super injured but Tommy was like "wow these guys are idiots!" and turns into kitty form and Techno goes :eyes:
- Tommy unlocks a door after shuffling through a vent and drags Techno out. And he basically takes Techno to a payphone and goes "see ya!"
- Techno starts a search for a Cat shifter, unknowing it's his brother. He is unenthusiastic about having a brother when he's more concerned by the cat shifter. So he's distant while Phil and Wilbur are turning every rock over to find Tommy.

- Tommy becomes a narc under Quackity's protection. Ppl talk in front of cats. You know? Its nice and he gets a roof over his head. Q doesn't know how Tommy gets info. But he pays Tommy well.
- ??? lost my notes but I wanted big kitties and small cat boy Tommy
- Phil pinning Tommy down under one paw and giving him a big old lick to clean his new kitty sonboy. Hell yeah.

Familiar AU

Chapter Summary

Familiar AU written January 2023

Chapter Notes

TW for (magical) eating disorder.

SBI are a bit darker than my usual flavor.

no editing whatsoever.

There was an itch under his skin. Tommy could feel it, and through experience he knew that scratching at the offending area would do nothing to fix it. Still, he ran his fingers through his greasy hair before letting his fingers drape across the nape of his neck. Scratching at the skin there.

His legs ached. It started at his feet, and as the night progressed, the pain traveled up his calves, wrapped around his knees, and up his spine. A result of his poor posture and the fact that his job required him to stay standing the full shift. Every step was painful to a degree that most people would cry from. But that wasn't the worst sensation Tommy felt right now.

It was the *emptiness*. The black hole that was tugging at his lungs and heart. Eating up his bones. Gnawing at *nothing* and screaming into the void for Tommy to fill it.

He was *starving*.

But he had a fucking week to go to his next appointment with that quack of a doctor. It would only get worse, but Tommy had years under his belt at this point. Knowing the slight relief of artificial magic would last a day, perhaps even two, before he would fall into the unending cycle of hunger again.

Tommy scratched at his neck again. The itch climbing down his back. He could fix this. He hadn't shifted in a hot minute, and the feeling of changing skins felt freeing. Almost. But he was exhausted right now. Maybe he could sleep as a cat today. Or maybe a dog? That might be nice.

Tommy squinted at the bright sun as it crested over the buildings. Fucking asshole. He stumbled slightly as he threw the hood of his jacket over his head to keep the light from invading. The smell of gasoline that stuck to his clothes after every shift made his sensitive nose wrinkle. But it was better than the smell of smoke. Some assholes would come in, buy a pack of smokes, and then light one up right next to the fucking gas pumps. Tommy would have to chase them away before they did something idiotic.

Thankfully, there hadn't been a lot of assholes tonight, hanging around the gas station to try and bum a cig off somebody. Instead, Tommy had stood at the register and did fuck all. Flicking a wrapper around idly. Staring at the clock as it ticked onwards, painfully slow once it hit three in the morning.

Tommy stumbled up to the bench by the bus stop and, with a sigh of relief, planted his ass down. Immediately the pain in his legs eased. The woman on the other side of the bench pulled her bag closer to her chest. Eying Tommy with absolute disdain.

"Fuck you too," Tommy scoffed at her, before slumping over. She gasped, scandalized by his language. But Tommy had no shits to give, and even less to care about. He wasn't on the clock. Nobody could fucking tell him what to do right now.

The woman fumbled with her purse, pulling an item out and holding up between them with shaky hands. Tommy barely glanced at it before his lips peeled back in a wordless sneer. There was a faint amount of magic on it, and Tommy's empty core suddenly throbbed in agony.

It was hungry.

Tommy knew better than to eat some shitty dollar store holy symbol though. It wouldn't hold a mosquito back. The magic was there for show. A slight glow.

It stank of a witch.

"That's a piece of shit protection right there," Tommy pointed out, even as he mentally bristled at the object. "You'd be better off with pepper spray from walmart, bitch."

"The power of Christ-"

"Oh, excuse me!" Tommy sarcastically exclaimed, "I didn't know Christ sold tacky holy symbols. When did he come back?"

The woman's face grew beat red. "Your kind deserves what it gets. Monsters, all of you."

Tommy's eyebrows raised up, "lady, you know that us," he held up two fingers and made an air quotation movement, "'monsters' outnumber humans, right? *You're* the minority. Tell that to the Goat Mayor. Or the werewolf president? Or maybe-"

The woman opened her mouth, but before she could spew any more hate, the bus slid in front of them. Tommy got up, even as she stuttered, ignoring her completely as he climbed the familiar stairs.

“Mornin’,” the driver spoke, and Tommy gave him a tired nod. Swiping his bus card at the terminal before heading to the back of the bus and collapsing on the seat. The woman was at the front of the bus, waving and gesturing at Tommy in the back before the driver spoke dryly, “ma’am, I’m half fae. If you have a problem with this, get off the bus.”

The woman got off the bus, but not without some choice words that Tommy tuned out. He closed his eyes. Leaning his head against the soft leather seats as the bus hissed and began to move.

Tommy’s leg jumped up and down as he waited in the sterile office of his magical therapy doctor. It was the final stretch of the wait. When the empty gulf in his stomach actually was filled. Briefly. Momentarily.

It cost him far too much money to be here on a whim. It took a month before it truly got unbearable. And, with squeezing his pennies together, he could just barely afford once a month sessions. Of course, Tommy always went with the cheapest option of them all. Synthetized magic, tasteless and numbing. He read on online forms that the only difference between recycled magic and synthetized magic was the gut feeling. Both paled in comparison to the real stuff, the kind a witch could give them.

The receptionist finally beckoned him into the white room. It resembled a lounge, more than a doctor’s office. Fancy statues of curvy shapes that looked expensive decorated the walls. The whole room was monochrome and painfully fancy.

It wasn’t a surprise. In the three years Tommy had been coming here, they remodeled ten times to fit the current “fashion.” Since their biggest patrons, the witches, paid a shit ton of money to get rid of excess magic, Tommy figured they could afford it.

Even though it was ugly as hell.

Doctor Ponk sat on one of the pristine couches. He gave Tommy a smile. “Theseus, so glad to see you again. How are you doing?”

“Good,” Tommy wiped his clammy hands on his jeans before taking Ponk’s handshake. “Super poggers, you know? Doing great.”

“And how is your father? Is he well? I haven’t seen him around in a while.”

Tommy’s heart rate sped up even as it dropped into his stomach, but he just nodded. “Yeah, he’s been pretty busy. Works been poppin’ off, you know?”

“Really? I hope he’s been doing good as well. Tell me, Theseus, how is school? I know it can be difficult for you to be in high school right now with your disability.” Ponk wrote something down on his clipboard.

Tommy forced an easy smile onto his face. “Oh it’s been great. Homework is shit, like always. And Miss Smith is a bitch. She always assigns too much English work. Who the fuck

can write more than a hundred words a *day*? It's crazy." Tommy rambled, "but health wise, I've been fine. Hasn't really affected me at all."

Ponk was scribbling more down onto his paper. Nodding along. "Any sudden new symptoms? It can be to anything. You attend a public highschool, do you have any reactions to magical items that the student body might have?"

"No, none at all. I can barely sense them." Tommy shrugged. Then grew thoughtful, "I think I barely sensed one, though. Some vamp had to get those magic braces because one of their fangs was crooked."

"And how did that feel?"

"Gave me the shivers."

Ponk nodded and wrote something down, "and how hungry do you feel?"

God, Tommy wanted to eat a fucking *house*. "Just a little bit."

"When did you notice you were feeling empty?" Ponk asked.

"About a week ago?" Tommy scratched at his chin thoughtfully. "Same as usual."

"Have you noticed that you get emptier faster recently? Some familiars find that their mana pool can grow as they age." Ponk replied, finally looking up at Tommy.

Yes. Yes it *has*. When Tommy first got the magic, it could last a week. Now, just a handful of days. "No." Tommy lied. "It's the same since I first started coming here."

Ponk didn't look disappointed. He was too professional for that. Instead he made more notes. But Tommy knew what he was thinking. That Tommy was just another low-end familiar. One that wouldn't sell well, had Tommy even been on the market. His father refused to sign the papers allowing the clinic to sell Tommy's information for a huge discount on the synthetic magic.

"Have you considered going to a meet and greet?" Ponk looked up, his eyes staring over his gold brimmed glasses.

"Oh no, I'm still too young." Tommy waved off the question, even though the idea of going to one of those fucking events made him want to vomit.

It was for the best, anyways. Tommy refused to go fucking *near* a goddamned witch. He'd fucking claw their eyes out before they'd even *look* at him. Sure, they'd blast him into ash within a second. But he'd get his fair bit of revenge.

Witches were walking batteries of mana. They just created it out of nothing. An everlasting power source. The problem with that is, they need somewhere to *put* it all. And not every familiar had the space, nor compatibility, to take it all. It gets worse for covens. All of the witches have a particular type of magic they control, so they need a familiar that can take all

of it. Some covens employ hundreds of familiars at a time. Some don't fit the criteria for some, but it was better than the witch imploding from keeping their magic for too long.

Plus, the more compatible the familiar was for the coven, the better and pure return of the mana they can receive back from the familiar.

It was a never ending cycle between a witch and familiar. Passing back the mana to and from each other. They feed into each other. Never able to live without the other. Interconnected in ways that scientists couldn't fathom. It got worse the more witches there were in covens. It was so fucking complicated that it made Tommy's head spin just trying to think about it. Of course, some covens outsource their need for familiars. Others refuse to do so until they meet the right one. Donating their magic to centers like this for it to be processed and recycled.

"Well then!" Ponk clicked his pen, and sat the clipboard to the side. "I'll prepare for you your usual order then. Wait here just a moment." He stood up, brushed his white coat, and left.

Tommy dragged a sleeve over his face, moping up the sweat that had formed. Sagging into the couch with his filthy body. He was out of place here. He always was. Tommy had been just some random shifter. One of a million, really.

Then when he was twelve, he got *hungry*.

People called it fate. Those were the idiots who watched the shitty rom coms or the hallmark movies. People who believed that some greater power out there decided that Tommy was meant to be bound to a witch for the rest of his life. That he was no longer a person. But a *battery*. And that one day, he'd find a special witch or coven, and they were meant to *be*. Like soulmates. Except it was shitter than that, when you took off the rose colored glasses.

The familiar market was nothing more than just a human trafficking scam. They are evaluated for their power, and then sold to the highest bidder. Witches were *greedy*. Anybody could just wake up one day and become a familiar with no prior warning. Werewolves, vampires, demons, and especially shifters. They had a higher chance than any other breed out there. It happened to Tommy.

It happened to his *mother*.

The door opened, and Ponk poked his head in. "Theseus? Come in, we're ready for you."

Tommy let out a great heaving sigh before standing up. Plastering an smile on his face that was just a little too strained.

Finally. The wait was *over*.

He didn't have to feel empty anymore.

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A orange tabby sat on a wall and licked his paw. Watching the world go by. The weight in his stomach disappeared a handful of days ago. But the emptiness was practically not there. The pain so mild that Tommy could freely ignore it. It was the beginning of the cycle, before the worst of the pain hit, and Tommy took it as a win.

Normally, Tommy worked every night. But he downed a energy drink before the end of his shift. Now, the morning was well under way, he was still wide awake and buzzing with energy.

In cat form, that meant grooming himself until all he could taste was fur. Sitting still on a balcony near a busy street. Watching the people pass by under him, getting snippets of conversation.

Maybe, if Tommy was lucky, he could beg some food off of a few strangers! Gentle meows and big round eyes tend to give him some scraps. Fish was the best. Chicken or turkey was second place. But actually fucking cat food? Tommy would just go home and eat ramen instead.

Yeah, he was that kind of picky cat. And he will stay that way until he dies.

“-turns out, my fucking apartment, which I pay over four grand a month for, has a *ghost*. Nowhere in the lease did it say that I’d have a roommate.” A man complained into his phone as he walked past, vape in his fingers. He blew out smoke, “yeah, Mom. I know technically that ghosts don’t have squatter rights but apparently they are a part of the apartment itself-” his voice cutting off as he turned the corner.

Tommy let out a large yawn before dragging his paw over his ears. Before resuming his cleaning. How boring. Everybody knows to look for ghosts before signing a fucking lease. Idiot.

The street was busy. A group of men that stank like dogs walked past, all of them wearing flannel. Werewolves. They didn’t have the luxury that Tommy had, only able to shift one night a month. But they acted like total posers. Their voices were gruff and low, almost barking to each other.

One of them looked up and caught Tommy’s eyes, then bared yellowed teeth. Tommy didn’t react, instead he stood up, and turned his back to the dick and sitting back down. Ignoring the posturing dog.

There was a snarl but another wolf from the pack barked at him. The rest of the men walking away down the street, and the the wolf glowered at him before turning away. Tommy pretended to not watch them as they growled and shoved at each other.

Mutts.

“-I heard that there was a new season of Poltergeists on Netflix!” A girl spoke.

“You know that show is absolutely bullshit, I have a great great great aunt that’s a poltergeist-”

“Have you seen the new tiktok-” a boy was doing the fortnite dance at his friend.

“No! Absolutely no. I won’t give him a penny in the divorce. If he fucked a succubus that means he won’t get any alimony!” A man ranted into his phone.

“-and they were *roomates*- ”

“-icate coven is visiting!” A girl showed a instagram photo to her mother. “Can you believe it? Siren’s tickets are already sold out. I wanted to see his concert-”

Tommy’s ear flicked once at the mention of a *coven*. He got onto his paws, stretching his legs. His tail swaying back and forth as he eyed the distance to the ground. After a moment, he jumped. Landing on the ground lightly, before trotting off.

A few people called to him sweetly. A couple others cursed at him. Thankfully, nobody swung a foot at him. Tommy would’ve fucking shifted back and called the cops on those assholes. People know better than to hurt strays, they could be shifters. There might not be an awful lot of them around, but it was better than getting sued for taking a piss at a random cat.

Tommy rounded the corner, his tail brushing against the wall as he trotted up to the bakery. The door was always propped slightly ajar. Leaving Tommy free to prance inside after pushing against it.

The smell of other cats filled his nose. But there was also the delightful smell of pastries. Dozens of patrons sat at tables, cat’s meandering around as they begged for pets or food. The Cat Cafe was honestly the best thing to open in this city.

Tommy went straight to the register, pausing just for a moment before he lept. He landed on the counter with a mew, and the woman behind it turned to look at him. A bright smile appeared on Niki’s face.

“Why, hello Tangerine. I see you’ve found yourself back in my establishment.” She picked up a rag and wiped her hands on it. Tommy licked his lips, and she laughed again.

Niki was a queen. An absolute godsend. Everything she made tasted like utter magic. Literally. The tingles lingered in his mouth after. It didn’t do anything for the emptiness. Niki’s magic was a different kind than what Tommy needed. Warlocks didn’t produce magic in a way that Tommy could consume.

“Would you like some turkey?” Niki opened one of the warm ovens, lifting a hot lid with her bare hands. It didn’t burn her, and she picked up a thick slice of meat.

Tommy meowed, and when she came close, he grabbed her hand with both front paws to hold it still as he bit into the meat. Niki cooed, and Tommy allowed her to pet him.

Fuck. Yeah.

Juices covered his whiskers by the time he finished up the morsel. “Have you been doing well, Tangerine?” Niki asked, and Tommy gave a loud meow in response. “I hadn’t seen you in the past few weeks and I got concerned.”

Tommy licked his paws and brushed them over his face. Trying to get every single bit of flavor left.

“Have you been eating well?” Niki’s hand brushed down his fur. “You know, if you came in with hands, I’d give you a container to take home with you.”

Tommy’s ears flicked down, and he gave her a *look*. He came here for a rare snack. But to receive anything more was... unpog. He wasn’t going to come looking for hand outs. Although, that was exactly what he did. It was different though. Niki was nice to every cat that came through the door. Stray dogs lived behind the building and she’d feed them. Even birds had seeds thrown at them.

Warlocks were a different type of person. A different branch of magic. There wasn’t a fountain of magic that bubbled up inside of her. No, she crafted it. Through consumable items. Most warlocks went with potions, but Niki was different. She went for *food*.

Niki only smiled at Tommy’s reaction. “If you’d want to, I am employ you. I always need more cats. Since they keep getting adopted.”

Yeah, that’s why Tommy won’t take an easy gig like this. The real animals, the kind that people love to have as pets, they needed homes. A cafe like this was a godsend for cats that couldn’t find places to live. He wasn’t going to take their place. Plus, having to suffer people cooing and squealing at him all day wasn’t going to work either. It would just be annoying.

Tommy meowed at her as his answer, and Niki didn’t seem too surprised either. Instead she scratched behind his ears, which felt *heavenly*. “Fine, fine. I understand, Tangerine. Come back when you are hungry any time. I’ll always give you a snack since you are the perfect little gentleman.”

Hell yeah Tommy was.

He purred and let Niki pet him until the door jangled. A group of teens from high school walking in. Niki turned her attention to them, and Tommy slipped off the counter. Ignoring the girls sighing over his “widdle paws.” They were fucking *manly*. He slipped out the front door and back into the streets, another wide yawn hitting him.

The streets were packed as usual. Probably more than before, due to school being let out. Tommy spotted another roaming pack of teens, and wondered what it was like to actually go to high school. He dropped out in his freshmen year when his father...

Tommy turned and slunk into the shadows.

The alleyways wasn’t empty either. People crossing to and fro. Tommy hated them suddenly. For the lack of space in the city that he suddenly craved. Perhaps it was a part of being a cat right now, but he wanted solitude. He weaved through the streets until he found the quiet side of town. The lack of people making the hair fall down from where it stood straight.

He jumped onto a trash can and began to lap at his paws again. The smell of the trash hit him, and he inwardly grimaced. Maybe he should just go home now. He knew the way back to his

shitty apartment. After wandering around for years here, Tommy knew the streets and the roads. He wasn't too far away from a major outdoor shopping hub. The area laying empty due to the massive car park it required.

Although it looked hella busy. Even from a distance, Tommy could see the long ass car lanes. The vehicles spitting out fumes as they inched forwards to find a parking spot. Idly, he wondered what kind of event was going on. Sometimes they held some fucking wild things here.

It was no place for a cat to wander through. Too many people. Too many legs that could swing out and catch him in the gut. Intentional or not.

Tommy let out another tired huff, before standing up. The can beneath him shifting, causing a bottle to fall off and clatter loudly on the ground. Tommy didn't notice. He took another moment to stretch lazily, and that was when he heard growling.

He instinctively froze. His head whipping around to stare, wide eyed, at the end of the alleyway.

The werewolf from earlier.

It was clear he recognized Tommy as well. Rolling up his plaid sleeves to reveal thick hairy arms. "Well, well, well." The wolf spoke with an edge of glee, "what do we have here? A little kitty all by its lonesome."

The wolf took a step forward. His boots crunching under broken glass. "Ain't nobody will save you now, shifter. I'm going to teach you to treat us with *respect*."

Ah, fuck.

One of those traditionalist wolves. The ones all about hierarchy and shit. Top dog is better than everybody else kind of shit. Tommy took a step back, and the Wolf growled.

No fucking thank you.

Tommy bolted.

His tail was between his legs as he heard the Wolf surge after him with a terrible growl.

Fun fact, shifters can... well. Shift. They have the cool ability to be anything.

Not so fun fact, werewolves can only shift once but their human bodies are fucking *enhanced*.

Tommy was just a cat. A normal cat. Nothing about him was special.

The fucker was faster, stronger, and helluva lot more powerful than Tommy can deal with. Human or not. *Familiar* or not.

Only the presence of people could help. Tommy ran like his life depended on it. Shooting across the street with a screaming yowl.

The Wolf behind him growled deep. Tommy literally couldn't move his four paws faster. He was a blur. But he could hear the rapid steps behind him. Tommy didn't dare look back to see how close the Wolf was. But he could smell the stink from the mans breath. Raw meat coating the man's tongue.

It could be cat meat, for all Tommy knew. Maybe the Wolf ate a shit ton of strays.

Air brushed up against Tommy's back. It was all the warning Tommy had. With a screech, Tommy dodged as a hand swiped where he had once stood.

The Wolf was fucking *fast*. God, Tommy hadn't realized how quick they could be. The man's face practically blurred as he turned it to Tommy with a snarl.

They were close to the parking garage now. Metal fences lined the walls, to prevent people from tipping into the below ground garage. Tommy didn't hesitate. Slipping under the fence and leaping.

By the time Tommy hit the ground, he was something else entirely. His furry paws pushed against the solid concrete, and suddenly he was so much faster. His heart raced quicker in the smaller body.

Tommy dove into the sea of cars as he heard the thump of sneakers behind him. A sick low laugh echoing in the concrete chamber. "Aw, a little *bunny*?" The Wolf spoke, his mouth practically dripping with saliva. He licked his lips. "You really know how to get my hunting drive up, shifter."

Tommy was small enough he was able to run directly beneath the cars. His back feet thumping into the ground as it launched himself forward. He glanced behind himself, but he didn't see the Wolf's feet anymore.

There was a deep growl to the left of him, and Tommy let out a sharp squeal. His paws sliding as he suddenly back pedaled from where the wolf was lurking, only a few feet away. Tommy had almost ran into him.

"Run," the Wolf spat, and a line of drool leaked out the corner of his mouth. His eyes were dark. Fucking lost to whatever dog power he had.

Tommy *ran*.

The garage was filled up, the cars empty. The owners left to go see whatever shit show was being played here. But Tommy could help but wish desperately that somebody, anybody, would show up. A fuckin' vamp would be able to stop the werewolf terrorizing him.

His heart was jackhammering in his tiny chest. Tommy turned the corner in the massive garage, fleeing to *anywhere*. The Wolf was playing with him. Seemingly lurking behind every car. Jumping out of shadows.

Tommy had found himself practically glued to one of the walls. The Wolf stepping out in front of him, making him turn around, before he appeared again. Tommy was just going back and forth. Tiring himself out, at this point.

There were less cars here. But that didn't decrease the value of them, no, Tommy was pretty sure he dove under one of those fancy ass rich cars. The worst part was that they were fucking parked further apart. Like the rich people didn't want anything near their vehicles.

It meant Tommy was exposed as he bolted from car to car. Cursing everything and everyone out.

Then, a magical thing happened. One of the many steel doors leading to the garage *opened*. A man walking out, holding a pile of papers in hand.

Tommy fucking *teleported* his way over there, he was so fucking fast. One glance told Tommy this man was normal, a simple human, not a vamp that could tear this fucker in half. He wouldn't be able to stop the wolf. But Tommy didn't give a shit about the man, he cared about the sudden new area where *people* were.

If people saw a werewolf gunning for a shifter, then somebody would *stop* the fucker from eating Tommy.

Tommy brushed past the human's ankles, causing the man to step back. "Hey!"

Tommy turned sharp to avoid running into a wall. Suddenly in a hallway with thin carpet that his nails dug into. There were a few pieces of art hanging on the walls. Tommy blurred past it all.

Shortly after, he heard a hard thud from behind him. "You can't go back here! Hey- ugh!" Tommy glanced behind him just to see the Wolf bodily shove the human into the wall. The papers falling into the air as the man's glasses were knocked off his head. "Hey! Stop that!" He shouted, but the Wolf had only one target.

Tommy.

He turned the corner, and fuck *yes*. People. They all wore dark clothing, holding random items. One was pushing a coat rack that was filled with sparkly clothing. Tommy bolted towards them. At one point, knocking a box over as he jumped by. T-shirts sharing a logo spilling out.

"Hey!" A man shouted, and Tommy dove between his legs as the Wolf rounded the corner.

There was a deep growl as the Wolf dove for Tommy. The people all were shouting. Feet suddenly fleeing from the scene. Tommy hopped back and forth between boxes, items, people, one time even landing on a sparkly tunic. The chaos of it all made it difficult for him to keep track where the Wolf was.

It had been his downfall.

Tommy let out an ear splitting shriek when he felt a hand, so fucking bigger than he was, clamp tightly around his torso. His ribs began to burn, nearly snapping from the pressure. The sound from the rabbit eerily human like as Tommy screamed.

He was lifted up and, blind with terror, Tommy shifted again. Turning back into a cat, letting his razor sharp claws out as he swiped at the Wolf.

It connected.

For one, brief second, Tommy watched with wide eyes in horror as blood flowed freely down the man's cheek. Red and hot, sticky against his own paw. The Wolf looked down at Tommy, and Tommy saw the exact moment that the Wolf's humanity left him entirely. The man's eyes dilating until there was nothing but darkness.

Tommy screeched and bit on the hand holding onto him. He dropped to the ground and was off again. The chaos this time was a bit more manageable when he was a cat, the sounds less terrifying.

There was a guttural, deep howl. Echoing in the tight hallway around and around again. It spoke of fury. Of *bloodlust*.

Tommy dove for the crowd of people. Slipping between their legs. He didn't regret using other people as a shield, but when he heard a woman scream he definitely felt guilty. He dodged a foot that nearly stepped on him, weaving around the people. Tommy moved with the crowd. Some of them split off into side rooms, Tommy caught sight of one as he passed by. It was a tiny room filled with clothes and a huge desk with a mirror above it.

If he went into one of them, he'd get cornered and die. The Wolf howled again, making Tommy flinch. There was more shouting now, people, real guards, were getting involved. Thank the fucking *stars*. People who were meant to *stop* this fucker from ripping Tommy into shreds.

Tommy followed the crowd further in. A majority of the people were spilling into a room with double doors. Tommy crossed the threshold when it finally happened. A stray foot slammed into his side, causing him to tumble down. People were still coming, and Tommy's breath caught in his fragile chest.

He knew what happened during stampedes. He saw fucking Lion King.

The Wolf howled again, so so so fucking close. Tommy could practically taste the rotten breath of the Wolf. In blind panic and in pain, Tommy somehow, by some fucking miracle, got to his paws and ran. He couldn't see, couldn't think, could do anything but get *away*.

He ran into somebody. There was a loud shout, and then hands grabbing at him, Tommy yowled and squirmed out of their grasp. But then suddenly there were hands everywhere. Trying to grab him. People yelling, words melting into a constant noise, Tommy couldn't understand what was *going on*.

He leapt onto a box. And then another. His paws were slipping. The final blow of the hammer was when the Wolf *screamed*.

Tommy's balance failed him. Even as his paws tried to grab onto anything to stop it, they met nothing but air.

He was falling. His body already twisting naturally. His tail helping him flip over so he could land on his feet.

Instead of the cold hard ground, Tommy fell into a pair of arms. There was... just the *slightest* moment, where everything was fine. Tommy could hear the heart of the person gently holding him. Smell the scent of stale cigarettes and gunpowder.

Just for that moment, the world held still with baited breath.

And then it became *beautiful*.

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There was nothing.

And then there was simply *something* there.

There was no sudden shift. No momentous explosion of color. No awe inspiring magic that filled the air. It wasn't flashy. It began, simple and delicate.

A thread. Pulled with an invisible needle that didn't pinch or cause pain. It poked at the spot of nothing, and when it found no resistance, it flowed in. Like a drop would only be the beginning of a stream. The thread unspooled, and a sudden current of... mana? Jesus fuck, it *was*.

Tommy was frozen. His limbs, tired and aching from exhaustion, locked up. His heart fluttering against his ribs as he felt-

Warm. So fucking warm.

In a day where dragons soared through the air and fairies lived in state parks, it was hard to describe something as *magical*. But it was. Tommy's core wasn't empty- the fake taste of synthetic magic not in the back of his throat.

Instead he could taste ash and coffee. He could feel the magic flowing into him so *fucking warm*. It welcomed him. Settling into his stomach like an old friend. Or a favorite food finally hitting the right spot. God, he could understand it now. Why familiars would sell themselves into pain and suffering, just to get a taste of it.

Tommy could lose himself in this feeling. Just bask in the heat. The gentle feeling of mana swirling around in his stomach. He could lay here and purr all day-

Tommy forced his eyes to open from where the slid shut. The stuttering purr that he had subconsciously started petered off. The mana continued to flow into him, and Tommy could eat it up for the next hundred years without stopping. It was difficult to pull himself out of the strange buzzy state his head fell into.

The laughter made it easier.

The huff of breath near his ears, so light but there was an *edge* to it that made Tommy's fur stand on edge.

"Oh, aren't you a *hungry* little thing?" The voice felt like liquid honey, dripping sweet words directly into Tommy's head. A warning bell began to ring. "You keep on pulling it in, I don't think you're even halfway full, aren't you?"

Gods no. Tommy wanted *more*. More more more. He could feel the surge of mana just *pouring* into him. But it wasn't enough. It was never enough to fill the empty gap that resided in his very soul.

It was better than being empty. Tommy latched onto the feeling of the mana, grateful for simply a drop of it's presence. The warmth and gooey feeling that made him want to melt was just a bonus.

Now that Tommy was struggling his way out of the weird headspace, he could focus on the world around him. Arms, nearly as warm as the mana itself, cradled him tightly to a chest. But it was *wrong* somehow.

Despite the mana, the way it made him want to melt into a puddle of cat, Tommy felt something sliding up his back, against the grain of his fur. The kind of feeling when Tommy felt when he spotted a dragon high up in the clouds. The quiet *zing* of danger.

Tommy's head snapped to look up at the-

Witch.

He felt caught like a fish on a hook when his eyes locked onto the Witches. Bright yellow eyes, practically glowing, from the half lidded stare. The Witch looked nearly as star struck as Tommy, but instead of the electric way Tommy felt, his body was slowly relaxing. Like he was melting in a hot bath. A lazy grin forming on his face. A single sharp canine poking from his lips.

A finger brushed up against the side of Tommy's head. "Blue eyes," the Witch mused, "that's cute." The touch dragging down Tommy's neck, and Tommy could feel mana suddenly sliding down his spine. "And you're not claimed, are you? I don't feel one. Not even a hint of another witch on you."

Tommy's ears pinned down. His tail tucking between his legs anxiously. The Witch grinned. Showing more sharp teeth. A hint of light streaking down his face, revealing glinting scales.

Oh god. A fucking *siren*.

“A walking black hole and nobody has claimed you yet? Aw, poor little kitty.” The Witch murmured in a fake pout, “don’t worry. You’ll be happy with *me* . We’ve been looking out for a familiar like you for a long time. And like a falling star, you dropped right into my lap.” He grinned, his yellow eyes glowing even as a shadow fell across his face. “You’re *perfect*.”

Tommy began to tremble, and the Witches smile twitched down, just for a fraction. The mana shifted, and even more began to flow in. The heavy buzzy feeling coming back with a sudden vengeance, making Tommy want to relax. It was soothing.

Tommy tried to fight it off with a weak mewl. He was only partially successful. Even as he sagged into the iron grip, he was still frightfully conscious. “There you go,” the Witch murmured as he rocked Tommy back and forth, “that’s it. All nice and soft for me, aren’t you? Just the sweetest little familiar. I’ve always wanted one of you. Now, here you are.”

There was the sound of footsteps. And a new voice, somebody else, god please, somebody help Tommy, spoke. “Wilbur, the werewolf has been apprehended. Would you like for me to call the police?”

“Jack,” the Witch- Wilbur- spoke so soft and gentle, that the words almost didn’t feel real when Tommy heard them. “If you come near me again while I am with my familiar, I will rip your soul out of your body.”

There was a pause.

“There isn’t much of a soul to rip out of a demon, Wilbur.” The man spoke, “do you want me to contact your coven to pick you two up?”

It was just getting worse. Not just one witch. But a coven of them. The fear was mixing with the headiness of the magic. Leaving Tommy’s head clear.

Wilbur laughed. “Dadza and Techno will shit their pants when they see him. You know how long they looked for one?”

“I will assume, years.” Jack spoke politely.

“*Centuries*. ” Wilbur whispered, and the grip on Tommy tightened. “Not many familiars can accept death magic. But look, Jack. Look at my familiar. He just won’t stop *eating*. ” Wilbur cradled him in a death grip. “He’s perfect for us.”

“You should be careful,” Jack spoke, “don’t give too much or you’ll be high as a kite before you walk out the door.”

Wilbur paused, Tommy could feel his gaze burning into his side. “Jack,” Wilbur spoke slowly, “why don’t you *shut your mouth*.” The words rang with a shower of oddly harmonious bells. Tommy blinked sluggishly but he saw the moment when the man’s jaw snapped shut with a harsh click.

“That’s good,” Wilbur purred, “see? It’s so nice when people aren’t talking to me. Not while I am bonding with my familiar. Let’s see,” and Tommy felt himself being shifted around.

Moving until he was on his back, staring up at Wilbur's face. Brown hair curled down into Wilbur's eyes, but they didn't block the glow.

"You're a shifter, right? Cat's don't normally have blue eyes like yours. I wonder what other shapes you can take." Wilbur asked, a dangerous gleam in his eyes. "What is your name? *Tell me.*"

The words rang with bells and Tommy couldn't stop it. The way his lungs took in a breath of air.

Tommy, he tried to say. But instead, a pitiful mewl slipped out.

No. No, no, no-

Wilbur blinked down at him. And then he snorted, a goofy grin appearing on his face. "Right, of course you can't speak right now. Silly me."

Fuck no. Please no. No. Tommy began to shake again. He knew what Wilbur was trying to do.

Forge a contract. It required names to be shared and a bit more magic shit but Tommy knew that the second Wilbur forced him to shift he was dead. Maybe not now. Maybe not for a while longer. Depending on how long Wilbur and his coven would toy with him. But one day, very soon, Tommy's life would end.

Just like his mother.

The thought of his mother's fate spurred Tommy into action. His weak limbs, the mana still coursing through his veins, it worked against him. But Tommy didn't care. A sudden surge of adrenaline and fear shoved it all aside.

Tommy swiped at Wilbur with a hiss. The witch didn't expect it, startled by the sudden motion. It gave Tommy enough time to shift. His fur fading away, replaced by keratin. With a squawk and a flurry of feathers, Tommy broke free of Wilbur's grip and was in the air. With that, the magic that flowed into him stopped abruptly.

The room hadn't been a room at all, curtains lining the front and back. Boxes and odd platforms decorated the black painted ground. There was a gap, and Tommy sped towards it. His wings flapping with every bit of energy he had left.

The curtains had been magicked with silence. Because the wall of noise that hit Tommy as soon as he passed the red fabric nearly stunned him right out of the sky. Hundreds of people, maybe even thousands, were standing. Music booming from speakers, and they all were waiting for the show to start.

Tommy caught sight of a brightly lit up sign, proclaiming *Séance with The Necromancer Siren*.

There was a furious ear piercing shriek that cut through the noise of the crowd. Even the speakers stuttered as the wave of magic hit. The crowd went quiet. People turning to stare at

the stage.

Tommy didn't hesitate any longer. The open sky above his head, he flapped as hard as he could. Soaring up high and catching a tailwind.

Behind him, a noise rose up. Hundreds of people yelling, screaming, talking. A wave of wordless cheers. Tommy glanced behind, and perhaps it was a mistake.

In the center of the stage, a spotlight lit up a single figure. Head tilted high and wearing a thick leather coat. Distance muddled the features, but Tommy knew who it was. Tommy was far enough away where sounds were distant. But he could hear it, the voice trying to call him *back*. The magic didn't take affect. Tommy was too far away to hear the words in the order.

Tommy turned away from the sight. Working his wings up and down as he soared far, far away.

But he could feel the burning gaze. The weight of a *promise*. Magic churning in his gut anxiously.

Tommy was in danger.

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Wilbur turned without another word. The crowds noise ignored as he stalked past the curtains. The sound of dismayed people cutting off as soon as the fabric fell back into place.

Jack had his arms crossed, and Wilbur ignored him. His fists clenched tight as he pushed past him.

The '*I told you so*' was unspoken, but it was still there.

Had Philza or Techno been here, this would not had happened at all. If they had been aware of the situation, it would have changed. The little familiar would not have slipped through Wilbur's grasp.

The *gall* of him. For leaving Wilbur behind. Did the familiar not know of Wilbur's importance? The high standing, the fucking *prestige*, he could have simply by standing by Wilbur's covens side?

Wilbur crooked a finger at Jack and didn't wait. He heard his shoes tapping behind him a second later. "We are leaving." Wilbur hissed out, stalking through the crowd of extra hands. People who didn't mean *anything*. Little lights that would simply be snuffed out one day.

Perhaps Wilbur might be the cause of it. Sliding a hand into a chest and slipping the soul out. Gently, of course. The body might feel agony, but the soul was unharmed. Not that the host could know that.

A harried man, the manager, rushed up to Wilbur's side. "What about the show? There are hundreds of people waiting to see you perform?"

Wilbur took in a deep breath through his nose. Before his eyes slid over to look at the meat sack. The soul inside flickered as the man stepped back. "Not," Wilbur spoke in a clipped tone, "my problem."

"But-" the man seemed to wilt, "what do we tell them?"

Wilbur brushed past him without another word. Jack stopped by the man, "per section forty-two in the contract, the show can be canceled at any time. Tickets will be refunded. Simply let the people know that something came up."

Wilbur didn't wait, striding down the hall while stuffing his hands into his coat pocket. Gritting his teeth. He stalked all the way back to his car, sliding into the backseat as Jack tried to catch up.

The divider was up between him and the front of the car where Jack slid behind the wheel. Finally, Wilbur had to face his options.

Techno might have his hands deep in a corpse right now. He'd be too busy to pick up the phone. Blood didn't mix well with technology. And Techno was fastidious with his work. He'd take his fucking sweet ass time to call Wilbur back. Making sure to wash his fucking hands and to put the cadavers in a chiller lest they rot.

Philza was... Wilbur ground his teeth together before he picked his father's profile on his phone. After a moment, it began to ring.

For a moment, Wilbur hoped that Phil wouldn't pick up. If he could find the familiar without his covens help, he could lay claim to the shifter. Of course, Wilbur would share. Maybe. He was gracious like that. But if he involved his father and brother...

It meant equal rights. With Phil being the head of the coven, that meant he could call all of the shots for their familiar.

It was so fucking *unfair*. Wilbur was the one who found him. Wilbur was the one who caught the shifter as he fell. *Wilbur* should be the witch to contract with the familiar first. But it would be Phil who would take charge now.

"Hey, mate." Phil's voice spoke through the speaker. "What's going on? I thought you'd have a show right now."

"Phil," Wilbur let out an angry sigh, "something happened. I... found a familiar."

There was a pause. The air filled with silence. "That's great, mate!" Phil replied cheerily, "I'm happy for you. Do they handle your magic well?"

Familiars that took in necrotic magic didn't last long. Dying from the very magic they refined. But *this* one was different. Wilbur hadn't felt it burn inside of the shifter. Dark magic would harm the host, but this time, it felt pacified.

“They left me.” Wilbur bitterly admitted.

There was another long pause on the phone. “Did you make a contract with them?” An innocent question, yet it posed a dangerous one. A familiar that could withstand Wilbur’s magic was not common. One that Phil would snatch from his son, given a chance.

It pained Wilbur to bite out, “no.”

“Where are you again?” Phil asked casually.

“Phil, I know you will swoop in and steal them.” Wilbur rolled his eyes, “you don’t *understand*.”

“I would never, Wilbur.” Phil lied easily.

“Dad.” The word made the line go quiet. Wilbur was certain beyond anything that this familiar was *perfection*. The type of familiar that would *thrive*. Instead of smothering yet another soul with dark magic and watching it crumble.

That was the dream of every witch.

After a second, and knowing that he had Philza’s full attention, Wilbur slumped into the car seat. “I think this familiar can sustain us. All of us. I don’t know how else to describe it but...” Wilbur laughed helplessly, looking at his hand, “he was purring in my arms. He was happy to have my magic, Dad.”

Nobody had done that before. Familiar’s complaining how cold the magic felt. Shying away in fear.

The little cat in his arms, purring softly as he fed in Wilbur’s arms. So soft in his grasp. It had been dizzying at first, shock coloring everything. But then the euphoria of a familiar hit. It was painful, at times, to have mana flow through his veins. With no way for it to leave. It’s why Wilbur would do flashy shows, summoning ghosts and shit. Just to release a little bit of the power.

The shifter soaked it in, hardly twitching from it. And Wilbur *wanted*. Wanted them back by his side. So he would never feel the pain of the mana bubbling up under his skin. Wanted the familiar to purr on his lap, content and happy.

And yet he rejected Wilbur.

Fleeing without a word exchanged. Didn’t the shifter not know? Wilbur would treat him well. Keep him fed and a roof over his head. Give him as much mana the familiar would ever want. Surely, the hungry little black hole had felt the touch of starvation before. Wilbur was an infinite well. The shifter would never go hungry again. And yet.

Anger burned through Wilbur’s heart.

He had been *rejected*.

That wasn't allowed. Wilbur wouldn't let it.

Oh, perhaps... Wilbur let out a small huff of laughter. The rage leaving him. Perhaps, the little shifter was scared. Of course. That was it. He had simply fled Wilbur in fear. He must've recognized Wilbur for who he was. The Syndicate Coven was well known for their unnatural powers. The little thing must've been confused and fled. He hadn't knowingly refused Wilbur, the very thought was absurd.

"You're in Logstedshire?" Phil asked, breaking into Wilbur's thoughts. "If you say it's different... I believe you, Wilbur. Techno might not, he's been walking the earth for a long time. But I have found that humanity always surprises me in the oddest ways..." His father's voice trailed off. Thinking, no doubt, of humans who had died a millennia ago.

"Thank you," Wilbur felt relief. His father and brother would be able to find the shifter.

"And Wilbur?" Phil spoke, "if you're right... they will change *everything*."

"God, I hope so." Wilbur muttered back.

Phil laughed, "me too, mate."

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[scene here?]

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The werewolf, known as Weston, lounged in a neat cell at the local prison. Nonchalance oozing out of every pore. Decked in the orange suit, it pulled at his shoulders tightly from the sheer amount of muscles underneath.

Even as he walked into his death, the were-beast did not look concerned. Cuffs glinting silver wrapped around his wrists, a chain held by a prison guard.

Technoblade had looked over the mutt's file. Dozens of acts of violence were listed there. Pack refused to post bail. Apparently this particular shit head liked to start a lot of fights, and they were tired of spending money. The Alpha of the pack had sent numerous apologies. Techno had brushed them off. They were more concerned over the fact that Weston had broken into Wilbur's show, rather than the real crime Weston was in jail for.

It was taught in schools at a young age how to survive against those with supernatural abilities. Never be rude to fae. Do not tell a ghost they are dead. Don't bet against a leprechaun. One of those rules was, do not run from a werewolf. They will chase you down and trigger their hunting instinct.

Nobody ever thought what to do when a werewolf was threatening bodily harm. Running was the best option. The pack's lawyer was arguing that the unknown shifter was partially at fault for setting off Weston. Saying that Weston wouldn't have set foot in the stadium had the shifter not run into there. The property damage the stadium was leveraging against Weston

was a rather significant number, and the pack's lawyer was trying to pin at least half of it on the shifter.

It was becoming a rather complicated case. An annoyance, more than anything. Technoblade was not one to suffer fools. Although, one could say that he surrounded himself with the bodies of the undead. At least they had an excuse for being brainless.

Technoblade would have crushed the insect under his boot without pausing. But not every being had Techno's powers. The shifter didn't have the choice. Not when Weston singled him out and chased him.

Techno had been the first to review the tapes. Even before the police had them in their grubby hands. He had seen the werewolf chasing the shifter around in the parking lot. It had been a game to Weston. A cat chasing a mouse around. Weston did not care for the obvious fear and panic the shifter was in.

And now, Technoblade is the cat.

- Make a shifter au
- ??? profit??
- Didn't really have a plan with this one, lads.

DSMP To OSMP Switch AU

Chapter Summary

Switch AU

Tommy from DSMP is going over to Origins SMP. Written Dec 2021

not beta'd in the slightest

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy has been having some weird dreams recently. They weren't that strange, like thinking your face was melting off or some creepy shit like that.

It was beautiful.

Tommy had seen servers like that before. Where they were more attuned to nature or hippy shit. But this one was breathtakingly amazing. Cliffs that loomed over head, and for some odd reason Tommy wanted to leap off of. Oceans that weren't gray and lifeless, but blue and teeming full of fish.

Tommy would just sit and watch. It was a dream after all. Colors were warm here. Nothing like the faded gray that Tommy had learned to associate the DMSP with. And he basked in it.

He was staring up at the clouds in a meadow of wheat, dreaming of chasing them and wishing he could soar when something changed.

There was a rustle. And something hit the ground. Tommy turned to see a- person? Somebody digging their way up from the ground and pulling themselves up to their feet.

Fuck him, Tommy knew the guy. It was hard not to know Technoblades signature pink hair. It was longer in this dream. Tied up loosely at the nape of his neck. But what was different was the tall floppy ears that perked up and swiveled to Tommy. And their eyes met. Instead of the usual red color, Techno's were pink.

"Tommy?" Bunny Techno whispered. Ha, it really was just a dream. Tech's face was pale and surprised. His long ears twitching. He even had whiskers. "You're dead."

Tommy tilted his head and laughed, "aren't you supposed to be a pig?"

And then he woke up in his dirt hut at home. In a world of gray.

It had been a shit day ontop of a fucking awful time. Dark clouds hovered over Tommy. Literally, it had rained all day. And Tommy spent a majority of it trying to keep his dirt house from becoming a muddy pool. It had been frustrating and annoying, and Tommy went to bed irritated.

He dreamed of paradise.

It was hard to stay mad there.

He was on a mountain this time. Looking down on a valley. Tiny houses dotted the landscape. And there was a floating island. Probably man made, and a house was constructed on top of it, gentle smoke rising from the chimney. The wind blew through Tommy's hair gently, and with it came the sweet smell of pine.

The grass was so green. The sky was clear. And all of Tommy's worries melted away.

A rock fell.

It clattered to the ground, skittering away to hit others. And Tommy looked up to see Ghostbur. Standing in the shadows, see through and ghostly like normal.

"Oh hey." Tommy said, "what's up Ghostbur." He glanced away from his former brother. It made sense Ghostbur was here. Everything seemed so light and cheery, the epitome of happiness.

Tommy didn't mind Ghostbur. Although, "do you have any blue on you?" Tommy asked suddenly. Wondering if Blue here would be as vibrant as everything else was.

Red was the superior color. But Tommy would bathe in blue if it looked as gorgeous as it did here.

"Tommy?" Ghostbur croaked, and Tommy looked up to see him in near tears. "Oh my god, Techno wasn't hallucinating. It's you. It's really you, isn't it?"

"Uh yeah, big man. Tommy Danger Kraken Innit, right here." Tommy smiled. Then something caught his attention. He reached up, Ghostbur having moved closer within arms reach, to touch his yellow sweater.

"Your chest wound is gone." Tommy said, and then realized he could *feel* the warm wool beneath his fingertips.

Tommy never touched Ghostbur before. He was a *ghost*.

Tommy blinked and woke up with a gasp. Back in his shitty dirt cabin, with a large puddle on the floor. He looked at his dirty hand. The phantom warm sensation is still lingering.

Eyes followed Tommy. He knew the weight of them like the back of his hand. It was a sense he developed to protect himself in exile. If Dream suddenly came early and watched Tommy breaking the rules... It ended badly for him.

“Who's there?” Tommy called out, whirling around. Searching for a hint of motion. The woods were quiet. Frogs were croaking in the distance, along with the gentle hum of flies filling the air. It was a beautiful day, and Tommy was unnerved that somebody was *watching* him.

Besides meeting a weird mash up of a rabbit and Techno, and a living solid Ghostbur, Tommy hadn't met another person. But why would he? They were his dreams. Nothing strange was going on here.

“Hello?” Tommy called again. “I know you're there, fucker.”

For the first time, Tommy wished he had a weapon. He should have punched a tree a while ago. But this was all just a dream. So why should he arm himself?

It didn't feel like a dream though.

There was a rustling noise from above. And Tommy looked up to see something dark drop from the sky. He stumbled back, tripping over a root and hitting the ground with an, “oof.” But he watched with wide eyes, as giant black wings expanded. Blocking the sun out. And Tommy's heart rose into his throat.

Something primal inside of him said that messing with this guy would be *bad*.

The wings lowered with a gust of wind. And Tommy finally got a clear look at the guy, his jaw almost dropping when he recognized him. “Philza Minecraft?” Tommy blurted out, “creator of minecraft? What the fuck?”

Phil was *different*. He was still winged, obviously. But the huge motherfuckers were nothing compared to real-life Phil's wings. Plus, you know, Real Phil's wings had a giant hole in them. They were smaller than the massive wings this fucker had. Real Phil's wings were black, but Made Up Phil's wings were like the void. It sucked in all of the light around them.

But those weren't the only things different about this Phil.

He didn't have *legs*. Okay. Human legs. He had bird legs coming out of his fancy robes. And there were feathers curling around his face, making his soft features sharp and almost terrifying.

“Tommy,” Phil said softly with awe, taking a step forward with a chicken leg. “It really is you.”

“Oh my god.” Tommy said, wide eyed. “What the fuck are you? No, wait.” He held up his hands, “sorry. This dream is fucking with me. I shouldn't ask a figment of my imagination what they are. I don't want the answers.”

Phil's brows furrowed. “You think this is a dream?”

Tommy huffed, “obviously. I mean, this isn't real. So what else could it be. Oh no. Wait.” Tommy said with horror, “this is a hallucination. I'm becoming insane like Wilbur. What if I'm in the matrix or some shit. You're not going to make me eat a pill, are you?”

It was hilarious how some things never change. Phil's scrunched up baffled look was just as funny as it was in real life. "Mate, I don't understand."

"Neither do I. We shall live in ignorance." Tommy finally picked himself up. "Hey, why do you have chicken legs? For a figment of my imagination, this is pretty fucked."

"I don't have chicken legs, you little shit." Phil spluttered.

"Really? Because I have to say, you must've been missing leg day for them to get that skinny" Tommy teased. The closer he got the more details he picked up from Phil's face. The little feathers along his cheeks. The, quite frankly terrifying, razor sharp talons on Phil's wings. If this was real life, Tommy would be screaming like a little baby and running away. But this was his dream. And Phil was a jerk, yes. But he never hurt him before.

Instead of laughing at Tommy's joke, Phil got teary eyed and moved faster than Tommy had thought he could. Grabbing Tommy and pulling him into a hug. Wrapping him in his warm arms, and encircling them both with his wings.

It was warm.

Tommy could feel the silky texture of Phil's robes on his fingers. The prickle of a few feathers poking at him. Phil's warm breath tickling as it hit his hair. "Tommy. Tommy, my sweet boy. My son. You're here. *You're back.*" And then the embrace got tighter, and Tommy couldn't *breathe*. Phil's voice got lower, gruffer, *meaner*. "*I am never letting you leave me again.*"

"Phil," Tommy wheezed, "you're hurting me."

The hold on Tommy loosened, and he sagged into Phil's arms. Gasping for air. Fingers- no. Claws? Carded through Tommy's hair, gently scratching at his scalp. "I'm sorry, chick. I got too excited. It's been so long since you've been in my arms."

Tommy tried to pull himself away, but Phil didn't let him. He struggled, meeting Phil's eyes. "The fuck is wrong with you?" Tommy croaked watching as Phil's eyes darkened and-

Tommy woke up.

His heart beating in his chest like he just ran a marathon. Tommy sat up, staring up at the rising moon in the sky. It felt so real. He could feel the phantom feeling of bruises forming up and down his sides. Tommy pinched himself. Again and again, making sure that he was still *awake* and not trapped in the nightmare.

It was getting hard to keep the two separated now. Everything just felt so *real*.

Tommy sat in Puffy's office, jiggling his leg up and down. Staring at a drawing that he knew that Michael made. It was supposed to be colorful, right? There was a big yellow sun and two tall figures between a small little pink blob which could only be Michael. But it was all faded, with only the hints of color left.

“So Tommy, how have you been the last week?” Puffy said brightly, giving him a gentle smile.

“Uh. Great. Great. Super cool.” Tommy glanced around the room. He was practically vibrating with nervous energy.

“How are you feeling? It’s been a few months since the prison and I would like to check in with you-”

“Actually I have a question?” Tommy interrupted. “If you have weird realistic dreams of somebody hugging you what does it mean?”

And by super realistic, Tommy’s ribs still somehow ached. He must’ve slept weird. Right? His half built wool bed was a bit scuffed. But it was still soft if he fluffed it up before going to sleep. He must’ve forgotten. Yeah. Haha. And his body was aching from that and not from a weird ass hug he got from a chicken-Philza.

Puffy didn’t expect the question. Her mouth opening and slightly gaping before she smiled. “Did you have a dream that had somebody hug you?”

“Yeah. I mean. It was a very tight hug. And they might have said some shady things. But it was a dream so they got a pass on being creepy. But what does it mean, Puffy?”

Puffy tapped her pen to her lip, “maybe it could be that your subconscious is telling you that you’re lonely. But then again, it could just be a figment of your imagination. Can you tell me more about your dream?”

Tommy launched into a detailed explanation. Barely stopping to breathe. It was almost a relief to get it all off his chest. Puffy didn’t say a word as Tommy described it all. The rabbit-Technoblade. Ghostbur who wasn’t bleeding. Chicken-Philza who grabbed him. The *colors* .

Prime, Tommy missed color.

Finally, when Tommy couldn’t say anymore, he stared down at the floor. Puffy was waiting for the final question. And Tommy finally built up enough bravery to ask it. “Do you think I’m going crazy?” *Like Wilbur?*

Puffy put down the notebook and reached to grab Tommy’s hands gently. His scarred and torn up hands, full of calluses and dirt. “No. Tommy *no*. You are not going crazy. You are one of the most brave people I have ever met in my life. You have gone through some of the worst things that could happen to a person. The fact that you’re here? Asking for help? You are so strong.”

Tommy could feel tears in his eyes welling up. He brushed them away quickly. Pretending that he wasn’t actually crying. It was just... the humidity in the room is really high, okay?

“I don’t think you’re crazy in the slightest. I do think that your brain is trying to cope with some of the trauma that you’ve been experiencing.” Puffy continued, “as long as you

understand that your dreams are not real, then everything is fine. Why don't we set up another appointment in a few days and we can set up a plan to help you."

Tommy nodded, "cool. That sounds super awesome, Big P." Rubbing gently to his bruised ribs.

It wasn't *real*.

It was a relief to confirm it.

"My therapist says that you're not real." Tommy said bluntly, after appearing in what looked like to be a carrot field. He stuffed his hands into his coat pocket, looking around. It was a massive space just dedicated to carrots, of all things.

"I'm not real?" Imposter Technoblade said, raising a signature eyebrow. Tommy was impressed with his own imagination. "What do you call all of this?" He gestured around to the giant field. The air smelled sweet with vegetation, and the wind blew through Tommy's hair.

"A ha-lu-cin-a-tion. Come on, big man. Get with the times. I mean, you're a part of my dreams or some shit. I bet if I think really hard enough, I can make you hop on one foot." Tommy nodded, "this whole thing is made up in my head. And I know that because my therapist told me so. So there."

Tommy squinted down at the carrots. Why carrots? Techno loves potatoes. His brain was clearly messing up a few details.

"Really?" Techno had that weird look in his eye. The one he got when he was issued a challenge. He leaned up against a hoe, a large straw hat on his head covered his face in the shade. "And did your therapist tell you why you're having these dreams?"

"It's probably trauma or some shit. Anyways why are you-"

Big furry hands cupped Tommy's face. Gently rubbing his cheeks, and pulling his face to stare into Techno's. Bunny Technoblade (Technobunny? Bunnyblade?) had pink eyes. There were four whiskers that poked out of his face, and there was a bridge of about a dozen or so freckles across his nose.

Techno leaned closer, gently bumping his forehead against Tommy's.

This was the closest Tommy had ever been to Technoblade. Even if this was just a figment of his imagination. Tommy was speechless. Staring up at Techno with wide eyes. Techno pulled him in closer, folding around him and giving Tommy a soft hug.

Tommy's breath stuttered at the sensation. How was this Techno so soft? Was it because he was a bunny? He slowly melted into the embrace. One finger shyly hooking onto Techno's shirt to hold him back.

"Does this," Techno murmured into Tommy's ear with a wide grin, "feel like a dream, kit?"

Tommy reacted instantly. Even though part of him wanted to stay in this made up scenario, Tommy was a big man! And his pride wouldn't allow him to stay. He shoved his way out of Techno's grip, stumbling over a patch of carrots. A hand covering his face to hide his blush.

"Shut up!" Tommy pointed an accusing finger at Techno. "You big asshole. Fucker. Bitch."

Techno stood there, a big shit eating grin on his face. "So you admit then." He walked forwards, "it felt real, didn't it?"

"No! This is all made up!" Tommy waved a hand wildly at his surroundings. "If anything it's fucked how you are growing carrots of all things. Anybody who knows Technoblade has heard about the Great Potato War."

Techno paused, "you mean the Great Carrot War?"

"No." Tommy crossed his arms. "Potato. Technoblade loves potatoes. More than anything in the whole world. Except maybe Phil."

"I mean. Potatoes aren't that bad of a vegetable but carrots are clearly superior." Techno argued back.

"Nuhuh. You're tricking me this time! I know what's real. And this is a dream. And you can't- hey!" Tommy yelped in surprise as he was picked up and thrown over Techno's shoulder. "Put me down! Right now!"

"I'll put you down if you admit this is real." Techno said, walking with long strides.

"Piss off."

There was a hill that Tommy had never noticed. It curved gently down, and there were ornate windows. A large red door was smack dab in the middle of it. Fuck, was that Techno's *house*?

Damn.

It was made of dirt too.

Tommy couldn't escape the cycle of abuse.

It was cool inside. Tommy hadn't realized how hot it was outside until he felt the cooler air hit the sweat on his back. Shit, wait. No it wasn't real. But it was realistic, Tommy had to give his imagination the benefit of the doubt.

Techno dumped Tommy into a chair. "I still have some carrot soup from last night." Techno said, eying him up and down. "You're so skinny."

"Fuck you! I am perfectly healthy." Tommy said, like a liar. He gave a sullen glower to Techno, who didn't believe him.

"Here, it's still warm from my breakfast." Techno pulled out a bowl. "Trust me. It's good."

“I bet it isn’t as good as your famous potato soup.” Tommy said with narrowed eyes.

Techno turned to him and gave him a deadly stare, “potatoes have *nothing* on carrots, gremlin child. Eat.”

“No.”

“Eat it.”

“I said no.”

Techno’s long ears twitched. And it was all the warning Tommy had before Techno pinned him to the chair with one big fluffy paw. A spoon pressing against Tommy’s lips. “Come on, Tommy. Don’t make this difficult.”

Tommy firmly held his mouth shut. Twisting his head to get as far away from the spoon as possible. Techno traded the paw pinning him with his foot. Which Tommy only just noticed was a fucking rabbit leg?? Big and heavy, it pressed down on him. Techno’s other hand reached up and pinched Tommy’s nose shut.

He lasted thirty seconds.

Gasping for air, Techno shoved the spoon into Tommy’s mouth.

The plan was to spit it out and be disgusting so that Techno would give up. But the second it hit Tommy’s tongue it was... fucking good. Okay? Don’t shoot the messenger, but it was tasty as hell. The sweet creamy carrot soup was absolutely poggers. Tommy, against his will, sucked on the spoon to get every last bit of it.

There was a dark satisfied look on Techno’s face. And his paws gently brushed Tommy’s cheeks again, removing any tears that might have slipped out. Leaning over Tommy, a shadow crossing his face. “There. That’s better, right? You just needed a reminder who takes care of you, kit. You’re ours, Tommy. I don’t care if you think this isn’t real. Because you’ll always be *ours*. No matter what. Our little kit.”

Tommy woke up with the taste of the soup still in his mouth, and the sensation of furry fingers on his face. He stared up at the dirt ceiling before he could finally think again.

“Fuck you!” Tommy yelled at nothing, “next time I dream of you I am going to mentally imagine you wearing a tutu and high heels. We’ll see who’s laughing then!” And he punched his pillow in frustration.

Things have been getting weirder. To the point where Tommy is questioning his sanity. A part of him is deeply terrified of falling into the abyss that Wilbur went through in Pogtopia. But this wasn’t muttered ramblings or screaming matches with his own echos, like Wilbur had. This was weird because things felt so *real*.

Eventually, as the days passed, Tommy wasn’t just appearing randomly in places in his dreams. Like the mountain, or the fields, or the beautiful sandy beach near the ocean, Tommy

was waking up from where he left off. Like a continuation of a book. But dreams didn't do that, right?

But it didn't feel like anything was different. The colors were so vibrant and homey, and Tommy strolled through the untouched forests and streams. Amazed by what his brain could offer him.

It was all clearly some weird hallucination. Tommy saw some things that didn't match up with real life. Like he once saw a dark shape move in the ocean. Swimming around like a shark, but it's tail was far too long and Tommy swore it had *hands*.

Another time Tommy woke up in the blistering heat of the nether. He opened his eyes and he had never seen something so *red* before. The netherrack was beautiful for such an ugly block. The crimson forest was stunning. The trees glowing with mushroom lights from the inside out, making it all ethereal. He was stunned by the beauty of it all. But something caught his eye.

For a second, Tommy thought he saw somebody *swimming* in the lava.

Their eyes met. And he could have sworn it was fucking Jack Manifold of all people.

He woke up after that. The sudden displacement of the heat of the nether making Tommy shiver. He was back in his cold and shitty dirt hut. Going absolutely *insane*.

"I think I need to stop being alone." Tommy spoke, his voice cracking for the first time in days. "This is getting to me."

But it didn't stop there. Even when Tommy decided to borrow Tubbo's and Ranboo's couch. The time spent in this made up landscape was getting longer. Tommy was sleeping in even further. Even if he had Tubbo swear to get him up in the morning. But Tommy woke up the next day to find the sun in the middle of the sky.

"I tried, big man." Tubbo shrugged, "are you okay though? I went in to wake you and you weren't there."

"I... wasn't there?" Tommy whispered, baffled. "I've been sleeping all night, Tubbo."

"Maybe you sleep walk? Boo does that all the time. We'll keep the doors locked so you don't wander off, okay?" Tubbo tried to seem sincere. But he was distracted by Michael.

What the hell?

:3

And yes, OSMP Tommy died at one point. I dunno how or when but it the rest of the SBI mourned OSMP!Tommy. And then they get a funky lil human version of their boy.

Evil Techno Step Dad Au Written Jan. 2022

Chapter Summary

Evil Step Dad Au Written Jan 27th 2022

Chapter Notes

tw: non con body modification but nothing graphic

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The field of overgrown grass was golden. Wilbur would tell Tommy it's because the grass got too tall and died, the stalks rising up only to become hollowed husks that shattered as the wind blew through them. "It is destined to do nothing but die," Wilbur said, kicking at a dead patch of the plant. But Wilbur was a bitch, and Tommy thought that the grass wanted to grow up. Just so it could touch the blue skies and sway with the breeze.

It didn't die for nothing. It died doing what it loved.

And Tommy did what he loved, running through the fields. Crashing through the dried grass mercilessly. His feet slid around and mud stuck to his sneakers. Normally Tommy might actually be more careful. But he had just received news! Two riders had passed through the village nearby, and somebody told him that one of them was his father.

They had ridden past hours ago. Tommy wished that he had heard about it sooner. He could have beaten them home and surprised Phil with something cool or neat. He had been gone for *years*. Wilbur and Tommy missed him. And he couldn't help the big grin across his face as he stumbled and tore through the field of dead grass.

The cabin appeared into view as Tommy raced over a slight hill. And two horses were standing outside, their tack and gear still placed on their backs. The black one, Tommy recognized as Phil's horse. A gentle mare that Tommy himself had learned to ride on when he was younger. Her head was bowed low as she nibbled on the weeds that grew. The horse next to her was a bulky steed with a brown coat. Fuck, that was one huge looking horse.

Still, the sight of his father's horse was a welcome sight. It was one that Tommy had expected to see shortly after he heard that the war had been won a few months ago. But as the days had grown longer and Wilbur's temper shrank shorter, Tommy had almost given up. Maybe their dad had died in the war. And it was just the two of them living in the cabin for forever.

Tommy knew that their dad didn't die. The idea of it was simply impossible. And his heart nearly burst from his chest in joy. Phil was *finally* home! He better have a good explanation for not sending them a letter or anything.

His feet slid across the dried grass until he hit the gravel dirt pathway to their home. Birds chirped in the distance, and the sun beamed down at him happily. Everything was lining up perfectly.

He stumbled up the rickety old wooden stairs and pushed open the door. It crashed against the wall with a sudden bang, and Tommy startled at the noise. And so did the occupants of the room. Wilbur was sitting on the couch with a sullen look on his face, and Phil was standing.

"Dad!" Tommy shouted, a beaming smile on his face. And he rushed to pull Phil into a hug, but something stopped him at the last second. Tommy wasn't dumb. But maybe he was a little slow to read the room. The tension in the air was palpable.

Phil turned and gave Tommy a brilliant smile, "Tommy. I've missed you." But that wasn't what made Tommy stop.

Phil looked... older. Which made sense. A few years had passed. His smile was still the same. Gentle and loving, a familiar sight that appeared in all of Tommy's fondest memories of his dad. But his *eyes*.

They were dark pools. A part of Tommy's gut screamed danger. They were dangerous. Possessive. Unhinged. Broken.

Phil took the last two steps and embraced Tommy's confused and frozen figure. "I'm so glad to see you again, Tommy." He muttered, and he even smelled like his dad. Tommy met Wilbur's eyes, and they both exchanged a look.

Something was off.

"So, Phil," Wilbur said in a dry tone, "why don't you introduce your new friend?"

Phil withdrew from the slightly awkward hug and squeezed Tommy's shoulder. Grounding him, and keeping him there as he turned Tommy's body to the other person that Tommy hadn't seen in the room. "Tommy, this is Technoblade. He was my superior officer in the war. And he will be staying with us for a bit."

This Technoblade fella was a tall motherfucker. That was the first thing that Tommy noted, when Techno's head nearly brushed up against the ceiling. The second thing he noticed wasn't the cool weapons on his back or the dark leather armor- but his red eyes. Its like they drew Tommy in.

A warning bell began to ring inside of Tommy's brain. He stumbled back slightly, and felt Phil's hand press up against his back. The red eyes were like pools. Growing bigger. Sucking him in. Looking into every bit of him. They grew and swallowed the world around him. The room disappeared, lost in the blood red that pulled and picked Tommy to pieces. Digging deep. Searching for something.

Panic reared it's head, and Tommy's breath stuttered as those eyes were *looking into his soul*.

Tommy blinked. His mouth was poised to say something but whatever it was slipped his mind. Huh. That's right.

This Technoblade fella was a tall motherfucker.

"Cool cool, are you two done staring at each other?" Wilbur sighed, and slumped on the couch, "I have things I need to go do."

"Hey," Tommy's head snapped over, giving Wilbur a glare. "I'm not staring at him. I'm sizing him up." Tommy didn't see the subtle head shake Technoblade gave to Phil, nor did he notice the grip on his jacket from Phil's grasp tightening.

"Right." Wilbur drawled. "Well, this has been such a shitty reunion. I think it's nice and all but I'm leaving."

"Can't you stay here, Wil? It's not every day I get to come home." Phil said.

"You're right, it's not every day you do something actually worthwhile." Wilbur snidely replied, and he picked his guitar up and pulled the strap over his shoulder. "Why dont you and your buddy go fuck off again? We don't need you here."

Tommy noticed how Technoblades eyes snapped over to Wilbur. And he felt uncomfortable standing in the room with a stranger. He shifted uneasily, and it became almost even more unsettling when Phil pressed closer to him. "I won't be leaving again." Phil said calmly.

"Too bad I don't give a shit about that anymore. Tommy, let's go." Wilbur jerked his head to the door. Relieved, Tommy let out a sigh and took the opportunity. He walked, maybe a bit faster than necessary, and followed Wilbur out of the door.

Tommy didn't say anything until they were a few minutes away and the house was out of sight. "You okay Wil?"

Wilbur drew his hands through his hair and let out a groan. "Yeah. Sorry you had to see that Toms. Phil came in and just- shit. He left us alone and he comes back and expects everything to be fine and dandy."

Tommy reached over and grabbed Wilbur's hand, threading his fingers through Wilbur's. "It's okay Wil. I knew you were kind of mad that Dad left. You're right."

"Yeah." Wilbur squeezed Tommy's hand. "He was telling me all about how he and his buddy traveled around after the war and-"

"He did?" Tommy's face fell, "why didn't he write to us then?" They thought Phil was *dead*.

"I don't know, Toms." Wilbur sighed, "we're only a second thought to him now."

Tommy grew quiet, and leaned into Wilbur's shoulder. "Well, that's a real shitty thing to do. But you're not a second thought to me, Wil. You're my brother."

“Don’t say that, I’ll cry.” Wilbur said, his voice wet.

“Do it. Use your manly tears that I know you have.” Tommy teased, “besides, even if Dad, I mean... *Phil* leaves again. You’ll always have me.”

Wilbur pulled Tommy under his arm and ruffled his hair. “I know. Anyways- let’s go play some music. Let’s relax before we have to go back and deal with all of this shit again.”

“That’s a plan I can get behind,” Tommy reached over and threw his arm around Wilbur and the two of them walked into the forest. Unaware that they were being watched.

.

Weird things were happening. The house was the fullest it had ever been, and yet it was emptier than an icy pit. Tommy had never felt the need to creep around in his home before, and yet he was doing it. Every footstep was quiet, and Tommy was almost afraid to see if Phil or “Technoblade” was around.

The way his dad acted around Technoblade was... *weird*. And Tommy was dumb as bricks sometimes, completely ignorant of the world, but even he could pick up how his dad trailed after Techno like a planet caught in his orbit. Phil’s eyes always trailed after him. And once, when Tommy came home a bit late, he caught them both on the couch. Just... sitting next to each other.

Not doing anything.

Just.

Sitting there.

It was ominous.

The new earrings in Phil’s ears did not pass Tommy’s notice either. Nor how Techno sported the same matching ones.

Love is love, and all of that. But Phil wasn’t in that kind of relationship with Techno. They loved each other but *not* that way. To Tommy’s relief, Phil still talked about his mom with that sickening lovey-dreamy look on his face at dinner once. Which was super good. Great, even. But Tommy doesn’t really know what kind of weird realationship Phil had with Techno. And it was weird to place where exactly Techno was in the family.

Was he just... on a friendship level?

But friends don’t like... braid each other's hair and stare into the fireplace together, do they? Or mutter to each other under their breaths while sitting just a bit too close to each other. Or watch Tommy walk across the room with unblinking eyes, not saying a word as Tommy grabbed a glass of water.

... weird.

But yeah. Haha, so Techno is Phil's new friend. Maybe it was good that his dad found somebody to lean on. So he wasn't by himself.

So Techno is a friend of the family. Which means... he's not Tommy's boss. Right?

But that was quickly disproven when Wilbur tried to go out late with his friends, his guitar slung around his back. And Techno pulled him from the doorway with a firm look, and Wilbur spluttered and bitched and moaned until Phil walked in and said that Techno was in the right, and that Wilbur shouldn't be leaving so late.

Which fucking sucks because Wilbur is an *adult*. What would he act like when Tommy did something he didn't like? Tommy is still a minor.

Tommy was staring at this scene with wide eyes, not certain what to do next. The tension that lived in the once warm and bright home turned it cold and gray. And Tommy didn't know what to do. He went out and did his chores, and found Techno already completed them. He tried to take a walk to the village and Phil was almost at his elbow and telling him that they didn't need to go shopping today. Wilbur was sulking in his room and hardly ever came out, and when he did Techno was breathing down his neck. Wil kind of looked a bit pale and sick, and Tommy tried to go see Wilbur but Phil would pull him away and not to bother him.

Things were just weird.

Tommy didn't know what to make of it all. He opened his window to his bedroom and slid out. Careful of the squeaky parts of the roof and climbing down a low hanging tree. The lights in the house were off and the sky was dark. Tommy shuffled over to the barn. Opening the door and slipping inside. There was one person who hadn't changed when his dad came home.

Henry lifted her head up from where she rested it, and Tommy didn't hesitate. He climbed into her pen and gave her a big hug. "Hello big girl," Tommy cooed at her, "it's been a little bit since I've seen you. I've missed you too."

Henry gave him a gentle moo, and Tommy slumped into her warmth. "Things are awfully weird these days, Henry. I don't know what's happening anymore. But at least I have you, buddy."

Henry rested her head on Tommy's lap. And she was so warm. Tommy curled up and his head rested on a hay bale. He could pretend, that just for tonight, that everything would be fine. Yeah. Just for tonight.

Tommy shut his eyes and slipped into sleep. Unknowing of the red eyes that stared at him from the shadows.

When Tommy woke up the next morning, he was in his own bed. The only sign he had visited the barn was the slight smell of cow on his hands. His hair had been brushed and picked clean of any straw that might have lingered.

He didn't think much of it then.

.

Tommy had two constants in his life. Wilbur and Henry. Phil had purchased Henry for Tommy when he had been seven years old, and two years after that he headed off to war. So of course, Tommy would notice and try to find Wilbur when he wasn't around anymore.

Fuck, their rooms were *right* next to each other. It wasn't like the whole house separated them. But every time he tried to knock on Wilbur's door it was like Phil was summoned. He pulled Tommy away to go do something else, even when Tommy tried to dig in his heels. Once Tommy sat on the ground and refused to even move until he heard Wilbur speak to him and Phil just sighed and fucking hoisted Tommy over his shoulder like he was a bag of potatoes. Tommy screeched in surprise, and Phil just laughed and dumped him on the couch and told him not to bother Wil.

Which fucking sucked.

Wilbur didn't like Techno. And he didn't like Phil much either. Which made sense, Tommy understood it. Phil left them for years on end. It was just Tommy and Wilbur, both of them, against the world. And now there were two big adults telling them what to do and how to do it- it was frustrating.

But how come Tommy was the one being punished.

Tommy slumped in his room, doing dumb shit like picking the dirt out from underneath his nails because he was tired and bored and there weren't even chores to do. Tommy never thought he would ever miss having work to do but it was better than-

Thump .

Tommy jumped at the sudden sound. It didn't take a genius to figure out which room that came from. He leapt to his feet and raced out of his room. From below, Tommy heard a chair scootch backwards from the kitchen table. "Wilbur?" Tommy knocked on the door, leaning in to catch any kind of sound. "Wilbur? Are you okay? There was a noise?"

"Tommy don't bother-" Phil was at the bottom of the stairs.

"I'm not! I heard a noise-"

The door opened, and Tommy whipped his head around and met the sight of a puffy white shirt. Tommy glanced up at the red eyes that stared down at him. "What the fuck are you doing in Wilbur's room. Wil? Wilbur?" Tommy leaned to the side, and Techno took a looming step out of the room and closed it before Tommy could actually *see* his brother. "What the hell-"

"Wilbur is sick right now." Techno rumbled, and a shiver went down Tommy's spine. "You need to leave him alone."

"I heard something crash-"

“That was me. I dropped a glass. He’s highly contagious and we don’t want you to get sick as well.” Techno folded his arms, staring Tommy down as if to challenge him. Well, good thing this is Tommy fucking Innit because he could do this all day long.

“And you don’t think I won’t get sick. Huh? You gross shitty germ prick. I eat mud. For a snack.” Tommy rose up onto his toes, trying to get a bit taller so he could loom over this asshole. “Move. I wanna see Wilbur.”

Techno’s eyebrow raised up, “no. And I don’t want to deal with two sick children.”

Tommy spluttered, “*children?* We are not children, Tech-no-blade, which by the way is the shittiest name I’ve ever heard! We are big men.”

“Tommy that is uncalled for. Go to your room.” Phil walked up the stairs, a disappointed look on his face. “You do not call names in this house.”

“No no, it’s alright. It’s funny to see the kid try to get his way. Big man, huh. You’re just embarrassing yourself, Tommy.” Technoblade said, and Tommy saw red.

“We are big men! Adults! You might call us kids and shit, but we aren’t. We had to grow up, dickface. We didn’t get to be kids. Not when half the village wanted us out and the other half didn’t care. Bitch, we had to grow up. It’s what happens when your dad abandons you to go kill people. Fuck you, Tech-no-blade and fuck you Phil-za Minecraft, don’t tell me what to do.” Tommy turned on his heel and slammed his bedroom door shut.

He tossed himself onto his bed and muffled a scream into his pillow. He heard muffled whispers and he was half convinced Phil would come barging in and telling him off for yelling at his... new best friend. But instead the door remained closed. And Tommy refused to leave his room. Still angrily grumbling to himself and winning imaginary arguments.

The last few years haven’t been the greatest. But Wil and him survived. That’s all that mattered. They were big, tough, strong men. And they could do whatever they wanted. And no adult ever told them otherwise.

There was a reason why they were called the dirty crime boys in the village, after all.

.

That was that, until Tommy woke up in the middle of the night with somebody standing above him. It took Tommy a heart stopping second to recognize Wilbur looming over him.

“Wil?” Tommy whispered, rising up slightly out of the bed.

“Tommy,” Wilbur’s voice cracked, and Tommy felt his weight on the mattress as it dipped.

“What’s wrong?” A hand touched Tommy’s face, and Tommy woke up a bit more when he felt Wilbur shaking. “Wil?”

“I had a nightmare.” Wilbur’s voice cracked. And Tommy didn’t even blink, he shuffled over on the bed and gently pulled Wilbur to lay down with him. It’s been a long time since they

shared a bed. Wilbur and Tommy had both grown since then, but their limbs still curled around each other. The spaces between their hearts still remembered where to go, and Tommy curled up into Wilbur's arms.

"You won't leave me, Tommy?" Wilbur whispered. "Don't leave me. Please."

"Hey," Tommy reached up and lazily smacked at Wilbur's arm. "I'm not going anywhere. Stop being stupid, Wil. I'm not going anywhere. Not without you." He yawned, "now go to sleep, shithead. I need my beauty sleep."

Wilbur's arms tightened, and then loosened. "Right. Goodnight Toms."

"Goodnight, Wilbur." Tommy rested his head against Wilbur's chest, and it was comforting. To listen to the soft pounding of his heart against his ribs. Wilbur made music. From his talented fingers to his magical voice. Even his heartbeat marched with the tune.

Tommy passed out, and he didn't feel Wilbur slowly rocking him back and forth. Over and over. Again and again. Whispering so softly that even Tommy couldn't hear it, "*my brother. Mine. Mine. All mine. My little Tommy. Mine.*"

Wilbur stayed there until a shadow loomed over him. Red eyes demanding and silent. Staring him down until Techno leaned over and pried Wilbur off of Tommy.

"Naughty," Techno muttered under his breath as Wilbur hissed at him, "don't you know the rules by now, Wil? You only get Tommy when you're being *good*."

.

Tommy sat up in the loft in the barn. Picking stray bits of straw off his clothes as Henry mooed gently beneath him. It was harder and harder to get away from Phil these days. And for Techno, flip a coin and he'll be in the common area's of the house ready to stare Tommy down with his shitty red eyes.

Phil and Techno never broached the subject of the last fight. And Tommy didn't want to either. So it was... a bit awkward. Wilbur left sometime in the night, and Tommy woke up dissatisfied and alone that morning.

Fucker left him without waking him up.

Tommy was feeling... he didn't know. A bit sad. With a dash of loneliness. And even basking in Henry's lovely presence didn't help. He leaned up against a pile of hay and sighed.

The doors to the barn opened. Tommy looked over and saw the large form of Technoblade walking in, his equally huge horse right behind him being led inside. Tommy watched as Techno took the saddle off, and began to brush the steed down. He must've come back from a trip to the village or something.

Eh. Tommy was bored. Technoblade was a creep, but Tommy was also within yelling distance of the house. It wasn't like Technoblade could do anything before Phil got here.

Tommy actually hadn't gotten a chance to *talk* with the new person, and now was a good time as any.

"Where did you go?"

Aww, Technoblade didn't get scared. Tommy had wondered if he could surprise him. All Techno did was glance up at the loft and turn to his horse. "Out." He grunted.

"But where outside did you go?" Tommy stretched out onto the hay. It was soft and comfortable.

"Village."

Ugh, this was like pulling teeth. Tommy almost gave up and called it off. But then again. Tommy was fucking bored. Wilbur wouldn't do anything with him, not when he was sick. And this conversation, as silted and awful as it was, was the most entertaining thing by far. Tommy took it as a challenge. He activated his youngest sibling powers.

With a grunt Tommy stood up and slid down the ladder of the loft, bounding over to stand next to Techno. "What did you get at the village? Did you go to trade? I love the bakery there. Have you tried the bread there? Did Phil ever tell you about us? How did you meet my dad?" Tommy shot out question after question.

Techno didn't pause brushing, "I was there on business. I did not stop by the bakery." He gave Tommy a glance, "I met your father on the battlefield."

There was a beat, and Tommy's nose scrunched up when he realized that Technoblade wasn't going to elaborate. Well, he's talked to worse people. Instead of leaving, Tommy perched on one of Henry's fence posts, and promptly got comfortable. He wasn't going anywhere.

"What's your favorite color?"

There was a second before Techno replied, "red."

"Ha! Same. I love red too. What is your favorite tree? Personally I think oak is poggers." Tommy rambled on. He waited until Technoblade answered and then continued. It was surprisingly fun to mindlessly talk to him. Even after Technoblade was done tending to Carl, Tommy found out the horse's name, Tommy trailed after him like a duck, shooting a thousand questions at him and getting a few short answers in response.

.

After a few days of trailing behind Technoblade, Wilbur emerged from his room. Tommy hadn't known that Wilbur was getting better to come down to dinner, and he was already seated next to Phil when Wilbur walked in with Technoblade breathing down his neck.

.

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-techno is a god who decided to keep phil and thus, phil's boys

-he turned phil really early, and now he is slowly workin on wilbur

-gotta separate the boys

-its easy to attach wilbur to himself if he makes wilbur possessive of ✨family✨ he does this to phil as well

tommy: uhhhh whatcha doin?

Techno, slowly molding wilbur in the palm of his hand: nothin'

-eventually when wilbur is done then its time to go to tommy

-horror movie style :)

Chapter End Notes

i will be closing my fics in the next few days. Sadly, with the threat of AI, I don't feel comfortable allowing unregistered users access to my writing. If you do not have an ao3 account, please start the process. It's nice to have darkmode on ao3. My fics are open to registered users, but guests will no longer be able to see them.

Another Vampire Au (Summarized)

Chapter Summary

Vampire au (one of a thousand), written Feb 21 2022

Chapter Notes

Summarized outline of a vampire au ur all welcome

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When a fledgling is still smol, and barely transforming, they take a lot of biological material and use it to create what kind of vampire they will be. Like a vampire has a type of evolution that they go through the longer they live. so everybody is unique. but some get like... hella awesome powers. And what I'm basically going for is that a sire can pass those powers on to their fledglings when they're very young. Dream is trying to steal it.

.

Techno got taken by Dream. He is sitting on the cold stone floor, a blindfold over his eyes and a muzzle over his mouth, heavy chains that humans couldn't even lift wrapped around his wrists. He is stuck.

And he hears a pitter patter of feet. Soft. and barely noticeable. Whoever it is is circling him. Going around in circles and getting nearer and nearer. He lets out an angry growl, and the figure backs away. But time ticks on, and they come closer.

And then the smell hits him. The soft barely human stench mixed with venom and blood. A fledgling. So new it should be in the nest still. Rather being forced to hunt for food- it should be lavished with their sire's blood and- Oh.

That's what Techno is here for.

Techno waits for it's hunger to cave. It will tear open his throat. He will not die. But sitting here, unable to move, is a target even the newest of vampires would take advantage of. He is easy prey. As much as it rankles, Techno knows how to see how Dream is trying to use him.

Techno's power is unique to him. Grown over a millennia under Phil's careful eye, Techno is a powerhouse. And Dream is going to use this fledgling to steal it from him. Mimic Techno's

powers to give Dream the tool and power that he has always craved.

The fledgling is getting braver. Bolder. Coming closer. A hand rests on Techno's thigh, and then it flinches back as Techno shifts. This will be painful. The fledgling will not care to make it easy or neat.

Instead of pain, which Techno was bracing himself for, he heard them swallow heavily and a reedy, painfully young voice of a boy asks, "are you okay?"

Shock doesn't even describe how Techno feels. The boy is young. And even as Techno sniffs the air and focuses on this hearing, he can hear how the young boy's heart is feebly slowing down. Most fledglings are out for this part, so the fact that this one is awake is strange. But the child should be almost feral. The initial fury the body feels when injected with venom is like a shot of adrenaline of pure rage. The child should be ripping him apart.

He hears the child swallow repeatedly. Over and over. But still he sits next to Techno, and he doesn't move to bite him. "I don't know if I can remove the uh... things." The boy says, and Techno can hear the child timidly reaching up to touch the muzzle. It's locked. Techno heard the pins clicking in place when Dream shoved it on his face. Instead he felt the child reach up and tug at the blind fold. Techno's hair had been carelessly knotted in the tight strangle hold it had on his face. And with a surprisingly amount of care, the fledgling untangled it and undid the knots the fabric held.

Techno's eyes locked on the child.

The child is dirty, wearing nothing more than rags. But even in the darkness Techno could make out the blonde hair and chilling blue eyes the boy held. If Techno didn't know Dream did everything purposeful, he could have said that the child looked like Philza's son. It would be an extra twist of the knife to have a vampire with Techno's power with Phil's similar features.

There was a large crust of blood across the child's neck and down his shoulder. No doubt where Dream had bitten him. It was considered poor taste to keep a fledgling bloodied after their turning bite. Dream did not care for this child. Not with how the boy's limbs shook. How his ribs were jutting out from behind the fabric. Nor, as Techno glanced around the room, was there a nest.

This was meant for one thing and one thing only- Techno's power. The boy was nothing but a tool.

"I'm- I'm sorry." The boy said, leaning closer. Techno watched as the boy's eyes locked onto his throat. He did not move. "But uh." He swallowed three times in a row. "Can- can I just. Sit. Here. And uh. Please?" Techno watched with amazement as the boy tore his eyes from his throat and shakily climbed into Techno's lap. The clear bloodlust the child had must be banging at his head, demanding him to *eat*. And yet- all the boy did was curl up in a ball on Techno.

A nest.

Techno is the closest thing to a nest in this dark and empty cold room.

The power of the blood god has an incredible downside. Techno can ignore it. Push away the voices that clamber and demand things from him. Yelling in his head for attention.

And something curled around Techno's dead heart as he watched the child stutter and breathe. Shaking in the cold room. Looking for comfort. Finding little to no warmth with Techno. And he wished, suddenly with a rush, that he could bundle the boy up. To set him next to a fire and let him feel warmth for the last time in his life.

But... what control the boy had. He should be feral. Not speaking apologies. The will power he held to push down his instincts. He would be perfect for Techno's power.

Did Dream know-? No. The only people who knew about Chat were Phil and Wilbur, his coven. It's a closely kept secret.

The boy leaned into Techno, his shaking hands gripping at the thin poet's shirt he wore and he buried his face into it.

There was a literal gem on top of Techno.

Time passed. Techno watched as the fledgling slipped into slumber. Their breath slowly cooling against his chest. Fascinated with every movement. Every twitch. It wasn't like he had anything else to pay attention to. It was a slow death. Techno hadn't been with Phil when he turned Wilbur a dozen centuries ago. And this was the first time he watched the change.

Hours passed. Perhaps even a day or two. Time meant nothing to him anymore. But the fledgling's heart slowly grew still. And Techno closed his eyes, mourning for a soft moment, when the next beat did not appear.

It did not take long after that for the child to awaken with his new goal. To be fed. His body is demanding blood to continue to operate. And Techno wondered if this would be any different. Would the boy succumb finally? Or would he fight it?

The answer was delightfully against his expectations. The boy's blue eyes flicked open, and Techno watched as they dilated. The boy swallowed heavily, before pulling himself up from his slumped position. "S'rry." He slurred, his eyes darting around the room before settling back on Techno. "I'm- I'm very... hungry. S'rry. Could..."

He didn't finish his sentence, instead leaning forward to mouth at Techno's arm. His fangs haven't come in yet. Probably won't be for another week or two. But he did not bite Techno. Scraping his teeth against him before pulling back. "S'rry again. I'm- I don't-" the boy blinked up at Techno, "what do I do?"

Techno couldn't say a word. Instead he let out a huff of air. And the boy blinked a few more times before, "oh right. Can't speak." And he tilted forward and bumped his head against Techno's chest. "I dunno what to do. I wanna bite you but that's like- gross." Techno snorted again, this time in amusement.

"I'm hungry." The kid said once more. "Do you think they'll give us something to eat soon?" Philza help him right now, the child doesn't realize that Techno *is the food*.

Techno knows that turning is a delicate process. He doesn't know how much time before the child's boy just straight up stops to function and ends the boy's life finally. Phil is the only one who would know. Techno wished his sire was here, more than once, in the last few minutes.

"I think I'll go back to sleep." The boy mutters, and Techno is afraid that if he did then the child would never wake again. Sires are supposed to feed their fledglings as soon as they can. Hell, even when the fledgling is asleep. The boy can only survive on the venom for too long.

Techno shifted. The heavy, almost football sized chains that lock him into place shift with a click. He cannot move very far. But enough to reach a clawed hand up and clench tightly. His fingernails were always a bit too sharp. And with enough force it broke through the skin on his palm. Blood seeped out.

The scent filled the air.

The child jolted up right. Almost like he was electrocuted. And finally- the boy fell into his instincts. Mindless with only one goal. Techno opened his palm and the pool of blood began to leak from it. And the boy gripped his hand and fell into the blood. Slurping at it and aiming to eat every last drop that appeared.

The wound healed itself. And the boy let out a high pitched whine that jolted something inside of Techno. He let out a low croon, to calm the boy, as he clenched his hand once more. There was something... magnetizing. To see the boy eat. Knowing that the boy is drinking Techno's blood. That he is depending on Techno. That he is *Techno's*. The idea latched onto Techno's soul.

This fledgling, although another vampire's venom runs through his veins, *is Techno's*.

There is not much else to do while taking care of a fledgling. The boy has no idea what to do. Running on instincts that are strange and alien to him. And Techno was feeling the same way. He was never a paternal type of person. That was all on Phil. But the boy woke something up inside of him. And Techno's only thought wasn't to escape. It was to watch and take care of his fledgling. His boy. His.

He ached to hold him. To bring him to Techno's nest and cover him with soft warm blankets and help him as he transformed. All he could do was sit on the cold ground, and purr to the child. And long after the boy passed out, a small, lighter toned purr stuttered up.

It wasn't the bond between a fledgling and a sire. But Techno was all the boy had at the moment. Techno was his whole *world*. This small room didn't deserve to hold the treasure that it does now. And Techno leaned down and pressed his chin against the boy's head. The closest thing he could give as a hug.

Time ticks on. It takes a while for a fledgling to adapt to a sire's blood. Or in this case, Techno's. Dream would wait perhaps a month or two before checking again. All there was for Techno to do was feed the boy and watch as he slowly stopped breathing. He no longer had

to. The boy sometimes talked to Techno. Between rounds. And he would whisper questions and look disoriented. But Techno could not answer.

Techno is, admittedly, ancient. And it would take a lot longer than a month or two to starve him out. His body adapted to living on hard times. But he still worried. Would Dream come down to try and feed him? Would Dream take away his fledgling? Would Techno defend what was his?

An aching desire, stemming from his newly awakened instincts began to eat at him. He needed his boy safe. He needed to put in him a place so nobody can find him. He needed his fledgling to be *hidden*. Safe.

Days stretched longer. And Techno can finally smell Dream settling into the boy's scent. The venom working its way into the kid. Soon it'll be permanent. Techno needed it to be *him*. The scent of a sire, of the venom. It needed to be his. He could feel his fangs leaking the venom in his mouth the longer he watched as the child slept in his arms. He needed- *he needed-*

Finally- one day- Techno's worst nightmare came true. He heard footsteps approaching.

Uhhh to quickly summarize bc I'm losing steam.

Techno is ready to fist fight anybody with his hands tied up behind his back when the door opens and it's Phil. But that wakes the kid up. The kid is like WHOOO IS THIS NEW VAMPIRE DOING NEAR MY NEST. And he starts trying to posture up Phil by clicking at him menacingly and Phil is like "huh, interesting."

Phil gets closer and it scares Tommy away from Techno who basically leans against the shackles towards Tommy bc *his fledgling can't be far away from him* and Phil misinterprets and is like "calm down, just a second I'll get you out." And the instant Phil gets Techno's arms free, Techno rips the muzzle off and grabs Tommy by the shoulders and sinks his fangs into him.

Tommy is *betrayed*. His thought process is now angsty bc Techno is his buddy but oh no his buddy just *bit him*.

Phil is like 0.0 "oh so that just happened, mate."

And Techno is grumpy as hell and his instincts are telling him that it's *wrong* to bring Tommy out of the room to escape and everything is open and Tommy can get hurt. He's snappish and Wilbur appears like "hi!! We saved you how about a thanks." And Techno just stares him down until Wilbur slinks off.

It's not their fault he's running on fumes. They usher him and Tommy back home and Techno is lost in the sauce as Tommy settles with a new dose of venom. Thankfully there isn't a sire bond to break, and Techno wins the title of 'best dad ever' but also Tommy is like *why did you bite me we were prison buddies* but now he has a real sire and it's fucking with his head.

IDK that's mostly all i have

Chapter End Notes

impulsively posting. everybody say thank you to unlikely for picking vampire au

3/6/2024 sorry for the update email that was sent out i suddenly regretted it and deleted the chapter i posted. I guess im not ready to upload old works after what happened. My apologies to everybody. Its not you it is me.

ATLA au

Chapter Summary

atla au lol

not beta'd at all

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Atla au because im weak.

Alta au where techno is the waterbender teacher, wilbur is the earthbender teacher, and phil is the single air nomad avatar. He powers thru and kills tommy's dad, dream, who is ozai. 1000000% more assholeish than ozai.

Tommy finds out he isn't a firebender at a young age. He's actually an airbender due to [checks notes] because i want to. His sister is Drista (azula) and he and her had a semi friendly but semi deadly relationship. When the war really starts to pick up Tommy ends up running away from the Fire Nation because he's always felt the need to wander. (air nomad in him) and he basically lives in the middle of fucking nowhere while techno, wilbur, and phil go in and kill dream, take over the firenation and end the war. Yaay. i think quackity was the firebender teacher and he was thrown onto the throne forcibly.

Quackity: nice! Thanks for taking care of that war

Phil: :) haha i couldn't do it without you. Also sit on this throne for me. And be my puppet.

Q: wut :0

Phil: wut :)

Anyways tommy wanders around and listens to the wind and he's a lil ball of joy. Yaaay. But rumors of the fire prince come around and OBVIOUSLY they cant have him running around so techno hunts him down as a badass waterbender. He is going to kill tommy. And he is like.

Standing on a ledge over tommy. And he's ready to Get Him and right as he throws himself Tommy goes "AHH" and airbends techno over a cliff.

Techno, hanging by his fingernails on a cliff while Tommy childishy chatters at him. Like a lil guy. He's a lad. He's a sunshine lil guy. And Techno is holding on for DEAR LIFE and tommy is like: omg you're a waterbender? Thats cool. Do you have penguin-seals? Have you ever ridden a penguin-seal? Have you *licked* a penguin-seal?

Techno: please... im... [grunting noise] do you want to come to the south with me?

Tommy: GASPPPPP!! MY LIFE LONG DREAMMMMM!! Do you promise??

Techno, slipping:yes.

Tommy: okie dokie [woosh woosh]

and he blows techno over the cliff and he falls flat on his face lol very comically.

Techno is going to do the sly move of taking tommy to phil who is VERY SAD AND LONELY as the last airbender. (hes also very evil and very murderous. Not pacifist at all.) Phil heard of rumors of another airbender and went to the southern air temple and Wilbur went with him but dipped after phil went all sad and teary eyed. Techno was supposed to join them after hunting tommy down but Guess What. Little Boy Can Fly and Techno Chases After Him.

.

Techno knew when the man ran into the ransacked Fire Palace, sweat clinging to his brow and blood pounding in every heart beat, something was going to happen. It was a fact of life. Staying with the Avatar meant he could never get a break.

It was good this way.

Technoblade stood next to Philza. His right hand man. Always within arms reach. He didn't have to read the contents of a shakily offered scroll. Not when he could feel Philza's heart jump and began to speed up. The blood pumping rapidly.

It was either very bad news or extremely good ones. Figuring they just ended the century long war, the Fire Lord slain at Phil's feet, his useless daughter's bending ability locked away, the Fire Nation fully surrendered and at their feet-

Phil slid to the ground, clutching the parchment.

Wilbur stepped forwards, “what is it Phil?” The Earth Bending master couldn’t read Phil like Techno could. But it still concerned them both.

The Avatar was... on a string. That could snap at any point. Phil spent years on the run from the Fire Nation. He watched as his people were slaughtered. Wishing he could stop it, prevent the death of his comrades, but the spirits forbade him. He had to become a master of four elements first.

It was over before Phil even had time to act. The raids were too effective.

Despite his best efforts, he was alone. Until Technoblade came across his path.

Phil’s heart rate was getting too fast. The old man was over a hundred years old, he might look thirty, but he had been pushing himself over the past few months to defeat the Fire Lord before the comet.

Technoblade stepped forwards. Placing a heavy hand on Phil’s shoulder. Mentally forcing the blood flow to slow. The heart to beat less. To calm him down from... a panic attack? Techno didn’t know.

Phil sobbed, weakly grasping Techno’s hand. “Thank you.” He whispered, his blonde hair falling into his face.

“What’s wrong?” Wilbur asked, plucking the scroll from Phil’s limp hands. “Is there another surge in the- *oh* .”

Techno grunted. The only one who was left out. And Phil began to laugh through his tears. “I’m not-” he gasped, “I’m not alone anymore.”

“Sighting of an airbender, south from here.” Wilbur added, not looking convinced. “It could be another false sighting, Phil.”

“I don’t care.” Phil spoke, hope so feeble yet so strong in his voice. “If there is a chance. A small one. I’ll take it. I’ll always take it.”

Great.

Techno refrained from rolling his eyes. But even Wilbur didn’t look that enthusiastic. They had gone through this cycle over and over. Through the many years they traveled together, reports of ‘airbenders’ always made Philza detour. Every time, crushing him. Leaving him silent and angry for a week before he opted to forget about it.

An angry avatar is a ticking time bomb. He’d never hurt Techno or Wilbur. But he would destroy everything in his path if anybody looked at him wrong.

“We need to go,” Philza was scrambling up, his robes catching his legs. He almost fell over. “Right now! They could be near the Southern Air Temple.”

Techno grunted, and Wilbur sighed, “we have things to deal with here first. We did just take over a country, Phil.”

“And?” Phil turned around, a loopy smile on his face. “That was like, two months ago, mate. I think Quackity can take care of everything.”

Techno sneered at the thought of the spineless firebending teacher. Phil had scraped the bottom of the barrel to find his teacher. But they couldn’t be picky. Not when any firebender would either kill them or refuse to teach. It ended in a lot of bodies, and a dwindling amount of firebending refugees they could pick from.

Quackity was... alright. Too weak though. He thought more about morals than of the gritty world the lived in. Once a friend of the Fire Lord turned traitor. And now he sat on his dead friends throne as Philza stood behind him, whispering what he needed to do.

Wilbur and Techno glanced at each other. And Phil let out a snort. “Fine, I can go by myself. You two don’t have to join me. I can find them on my own.”

“No,” Techno grumbled, and Wilbur shook his head. “We are coming with you. But Phil.” Phil stopped in his tracks, “this is the last time.”

“But mate-”

“This is the last time.” Techno repeated, firmly. “If there is an airbender out there, they need to come to *you* . Not the other way around. Got it?”

Phil looked conflicted. But then nodded slowly. “I suppose.”

“Good,” Wilbur clapped his hands together. A cloud of dust filling the air from his palms smacking together. Dirt encrusted asshole. No matter how many times he bathed, he was still dusty. “Let’s get out of here. I’m dying to get somewhere that isn’t red and gloomy all the time.”

Philza laughed, walking out the doorway. Wilbur hot on his heels, “mate, you could’ve said something. We could’ve done a trip to the harbor.”

“Yes, but the harbor is sort of blown up.” Wilbur replied, before his voice got too faint. Leaving Techno alone in the room.

After a few seconds, Techno snorted. And he began to follow the two idiots he pledged his life to.

He could never catch a break. Not that he wanted to anyway.

.

"What if there is more than just one!" Phil nattered on excitedly from the front of Chat, the flying bison. "What if there is a whole group of people!"

Techno let his head fall back with a groan. Holding a group of airbenders hostage would be a pain. It wouldn't be the worst. He could hold half an army's worth of fire benders in the palms of his hands. If, that is, they didn't outright reject Philza.

Call it bad luck, but Techno didn't expect any air nomad would be so accepting of Phil's violence. If there was any that followed their old teachings. As soon as they show Phil any negativity, Techno would *make* them stay. Phil lost too much.

He deserved the world after all his sacrifices.

But spirits above was he getting annoying.

.

Tommy wandered idly around. Poking his head into stalls and eyeing wares. Techno said they needed to stop at places before they could go to the south pole. But Tommy hadn't known how *boring* it would be.

But hey, he wasn't going to look in a gift ostrich horse in the mouth. Technoblade said he'd take him to see the otter penguins! And Tommy wanted to see what the South Pole was like. Techno said it was cold and snowy, but Tommy hadn't really ever seen either of those before. Living on volcanos meant he rarely caught a chill.

But as they traveled south, Tommy found himself curling up closer to Technoblade. The man didn't mind it, sometimes he would take off his heavy blue coat and drape it around Tommy's shoulders. It was super warm! But the downside was that Tommy had to airbend harder if he wanted to float. It was already pretty difficult, but adding another twenty pounds of fur on top of it all was almost impossible.

Tommy huffed as he saw another man pulling out clearly glued together swords and was selling them off for a hefty price. Those things were trash, the varnish on them was only painted on. But he moved on, keeping his head down. More preoccupied by the various food stalls around.

Southerners had different taste than Tommy. Less spice, more fish. And they pickled things weirdly too. Tommy hadn't had shark that had fermented in clay for more than a hundred days. But it was fascinating, nonetheless.

Technoblade gave him a couple copper pieces and told him to find something nice to distract himself on the trip. Tommy thinks it's because Techno is tired of hearing Tommy ask so many questions. But he kept those words to himself. He had *money* . And he was going to find something fun!

There was a crowd of people. Usually that meant something interesting! And Tommy was small enough to duck between their legs to peer at the thing in the middle. He heard the guitar first. A gentle strum that echoed out on the air, making it feel weird and vibrate-y. And a soft hum of a voice that sounded like golden honey.

There was a man sitting on a crate. An instrument in hand, his fingers plucking at the strings. Oh! A performer. Tommy hadn't seen one in *ages*. Dream didn't like them cluttering up the

halls and making noise, and Tommy vaguely recalled the palace getting so much quieter after he sent them away.

Tommy wedged himself in a corner and watched. And the man did not disappoint. His fingers slipping up and down the strings, pressing and making different notes. His back was straight, his feet firmly on the ground, but his eyes were closed as he sang sweetly like a owl nightingale.

It was a familiar Earth Kingdom song. Of two lovers, Oma and Shu. And the crowd around the man only grew as people stopped to listen. Watching the man who wore a brown coat and fingerless gloves.

Tommy wanted to ask him why he cut the finger part of the gloves off. Didn't that make the point of wearing them useless if his fingers got cold? How strange. Maybe Technoblade would know. Tommy would have to ask.

The song ended, and the crowd parted ways. A few tossed a copper coin at the man. This wasn't a rich town to freely give money away in. Tommy was sure if the man sang in Caldera he could've gotten a handful of golden coins for his trouble. Of course, he couldn't sing that song. He would have to sing something traditional. Perhaps, 'Praise the Fire Lord' or 'Slaying of the Beasts' would have been better.

His voice was sweet like butter. Even when he asked a few slow moving people in the crowd a question, "excuse me, I was hoping you could help me?"

Oh, Tommy liked to help people. He leaned closer from his corner. Maybe he could aid the performer.

"Ask then, bard," a gruff woman barked, as if she hadn't been swaying to the tune moments prior.

"I was looking for a traveler. A friend of mine, and I was wondering if you perhaps have seen him pass through these parts? He wears a thick blue coat, and keeps his hair up in a bun. Goes by the name, Techno. Has the glare of a komodo rino." The man asks, and Tommy freezes.

"I haven't seen him," the woman shook her head, "perhaps ask around in the bar over there."

"You have my thanks," the man bows, and the crowd finally disperses. He slings his instrument over a shoulder and heads in the direction of the bar with a swagger.

Tommy watched him until he was gone. And then he got to his feet. Taking care to brush his legs and pants off like how Techno does it whenever he gets dirty. Then he heads in the opposite direction of the bard.

Finding Technoblade was really easy. All Tommy had to do was look for the people who had that I-Have-Been-Intimidated-By-A-Mountain look. Really, Technoblade couldn't hide himself. He would be *terrible* at hide-and-go-boom. Drista was really good at the latter part of that game, while Tommy excelled at the former.

He ran up to Technoblade and pulled on the man's sleeve. For a second, Techno hesitated. He was staring some guy down. But Tommy was *clearly* more important than whatever staring contest they were having. And he blinked and looked down at Tommy with that 'I-Cannot-Show-Amusement-How-Dare-You-Small-Child-Bother-Me' face he has.

"Did you find a toy?"

Tommy shook his head and cupped a hand around his mouth, leaning up alllll the way on his tippy toes. He would airbend, but Techno had been very firm that Tommy shouldn't do that in towns. And Tommy wasn't an *idiot*. He knew better than to do that around other people. He wouldn't have even airbent Technoblade off a cliff if he hadn't been spooked by the sudden appearance of the man.

With a sigh, Technoblade leaned down the rest of the way for Tommy to whisper in his ear. "What?" He asked, looking annoyed but Tommy knew he didn't mind.

"There's a *weirdo* looking for you." Tommy whispered, and nodded, satisfied that he did a good job.

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Techno shepherd them both away from the bustling street immediately. Taking the back roads until they stopped in a dark corner.

Tommy and curled a hand into Techno's coat almost reflexively at the point. Techno's warm hand at the nape of his neck, guiding him to stand closer until they reached a place that Techno deemed safe. And then he knelt, checking Tommy up and down.

"Are you okay? Did they see you? Are you hurt?"

Tommy squirmed uncomfortably until Techno stopped, "no! I'm fine. I'm too big of a man to get hurt." He puffed up his chest, giving Technoblade his biggest man stare. "See? I'm all good." He spread his arms out wide, a gust of wind following his motion.

"Tommy," Technoblade whispered warningly, and Tommy winced and let his arms fall.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to."

"You can't bend around anybody but me." Technoblade shuffled closer, holding Tommy still in his hands. "You know what they will do to-"

"I know." Tommy snapped, a frightening amount of anger flashing across his face. "I don't need you to tell me what to do. We're just traveling partners. Remember? I can handle myself." Tommy has handled himself wonderfully for a while now. And he's big and strong and he can do anything. He didn't need Technoblade to scold him over something he already knew.

Techno's face went blank. And then he slowly nodded, "right. I'm sorry. Traveling partners." A beat, "can you tell me what the weirdo looked like?"

“Hmm,” Tommy’s eyes trailed off, trying to remember. “He had, uh. Brown hair. And he was kind of skinny and tall. He looked like a beggar, except I shouldn’t call ‘em that because that’s rude. Should call them ‘those who aren’t well off.’ I was told to avoid those-”

“Tommy,” Technoblade interrupted, “did he see you?”

“No.” Tommy shook his head.

“Good.” Techno sighed, “okay. Change of plans. We’ll stop at the next town for supplies. Okay?”

“Sounds good, water man!” Tommy grinned, and Technoblade didn’t look amused in the slightest. “What? I’ve been trying to think up good nicknames for you. You don’t like it.”

“It’s better than Hotman.” Technoblade mumbled quietly that Tommy didn’t think he was supposed to hear that.

“What’s the opposite of Hotman? Coldman? Oh I know, Waterman!” Technoblade stood up, and Tommy kept a hand on his coat as he led them away, into the outskirts of the town. And into the wilderness beyond. “Can I call you Waterman?”

“No.”

“What about Snowman?”

“No.”

“Can I call you-”

“No.”

“You didn’t even let me finish.”

“You were going to ask me if you could call me Iceman.”

A pause.

“Can you read my mind?”

A sigh. “No.”

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Phil would have Techno’s head if he lost the kid. Fire Prince or not, the fact he was an *airbender* changed everything. He was Phil’s hope. His friend could only survive on hope that his people still lived, and they have been looking for *decades* for any sign of another bender.

And Technoblade stumbled across one while trying to assassinate him. He was never, ever, going to breathe a word about this to anybody. Tui and La will keep this secret. Spirits do not tell the Avatar things easily. Techno had heard Phil complain about it regularly.

Still, they could not fault Technoblade for his actions. Wilbur would have simply tossed the child over the cliff. Phil would have been the most merciful, taking the child's bending away, and thus, solidifying Fire Lord Quackity's reign. They had worked for this goal for over half a century. A child would not stop them from completing it.

That wouldn't stop Philza from flinging him off of the sky bison if he learned of the near death of the boy.

Technoblade tuned out the ramblings from Tommy. The kid asked too many questions. He nattered on while Technoblade kept a hand on him. Keeping him close. Otherwise Tommy would be flitting around the trees wildly, getting into trouble. They needed to move quickly and quietly.

Tommy leaned into him. His slight weight was hardly anything, but he fully pressed himself into Technoblade's side. Clinging to his coat like a lizard rooster chick. Like he was afraid that Technoblade would push him away at any point.

It felt right. Keeping the boy close.

Theseus, or Tommy as he calls himself now, flinches away from contact. But presses himself close like a cat owl. Almost desperate to receive attention.

A strange thought occurred to Technoblade. What had life been like for the Fire Prince in the palace? He had heard numerous reports of the Princess. Drista was a mirror image of Dream. But he hadn't heard of the first born prince until after they took over the Fire Palace.

His eyes flicked down at the bandana that covered the scar across the kids neck. He caught sight of it only once, but it had looked red and angry. The scar would always remain on his skin, no amount of waterbending would remove it.

"Where are we going?" Tommy's voice cut into Techno's thoughts, peering up, unafraid and trusting at Technoblade.

"Away." He spoke. And he watched as the kid's face scrunched up at the simple answer.

"But why?"

If rumors of the prince being spotted in the south had reached Phil's ears, then who else would know by now? The rebellion bubbling up in the Fire Nation would love to get their hands on what they claimed to be the 'true heir.' There could be others, who would sell the boy to the highest bidder. Any number of them would hurt the kid for their goals.

He was far more precious than a prince. He was an *airbender*. And if people knew that-

Philza would sit himself under a blade willingly just to *see* another airbender. He would do anything for his people. The power of the Avatar himself would be used against him.

“Waterbenders aren’t popular here.” Technoblade replied after a moment, “if they were lookin’ for me, it was to cause trouble.”

“Oh.” Tommy replied, taking in the answer. “Okay, so you lure them to like, a cliff. And I can blow them off. Easy!” He grinned up at Technoblade, happy and carefree. “They can sit at the bottom and we can run off before they can get out.”

Technoblade pointedly did not remark on the fact that most people would die if they fell from a cliff. Airbenders didn’t understand gravity very well. “No.”

Tommy pouted, but didn’t push further. Leaning into Techno’s side as they walked. Their destination was almost there. A river bubbled in the distance. And that was all Technoblade needed to spirit them away.

When he stood at the edge of the river, he let Tommy go. He needed space, and the kid would be in the way. Tommy skittered away, as if Technoblade had threatened him. But then came closer, like a wave against the sand. “What’cha doing?”

Technoblade didn’t answer. Instead, planting his feet firmly on the soil and shifting his balance. Feeling the water flow and his arms reached up, pulling at it and bidding it to *freeze*. With a crack ice appeared, a long thick sheet of it.

There was sudden weight on Technoblade’s back. He barely jolted from the pressure. Knees dug into his spine and small hands gripped onto his shoulders as Tommy peered above his head. “Wow! That’s so cool! Ha. Get it? Cool?”

Whatever. The kid wasn’t going to get in the way clinging to his back. He still had his range of motion. He performed another kata, and to his surprise, Tommy tumbled off his back from the sudden motion.

The water he pulled up from the river splashed down as Techno released it, turning to the kid. Was he hurt, was he bleeding, fuck Phil was going to kill-

Tommy looked up from the ground, a puff of air softening his landing and moving his hair around his head like a halo. He grinned at Technoblade, “that was *so awesome*. How can you do that?”

“What?”

“The- magic stuff! Making the water move!”

“It isn’t magic.” Technoblade replied blandly. “I’m bending.”

“Yeah, but how?” Tommy was back on his feet and climbing Technoblade like he was a tree. Perching on his shoulder. “You moved and it turned into ice and then you went swoosh swoosh and then it rose up in the air!”

Technoblade felt his face flush. It wasn’t impressive. “It’s just waterbending, kid.”

“My name is *Tommy*, not kid.” Tommy pouted, “can you teach me?”

“I- what?”

“Teach me!” Tommy repeated, “the swoosh swoosh!”

“It’s *waterbending*. Not airbending. The moves aren’t the same.”

“So? It isn’t like I can find a airbending teacher. You know *something*. And that’s more than what I know.” The boy chattered on, and Technoblade sighed. He pulled the kid off of his shoulder, and Tommy went down without a complaint. Softly landing on the dirt next to Techno.

“Come on,” Technoblade took Tommy by the hand and stepped onto the ice.

“Just think of it, I could learn so much cool stuff and- oh that’s cold!” The boy jumped as he stepped onto the ice.

It wasn’t like Technoblade hadn’t noticed the kid didn’t wear shoes. But it hadn’t really been an issue until now. He really should get him something to wear. The next town might have something. Phil always wore light clothes, nothing like the thick heavy skins that Technoblade adorned. Maybe some slippers-?

“Ow,” the boy said, before jumping up and slowly floating down again to touch the ice.

“Ow.” He did it again, and Technoblade let out an amused huff when it looked like Tommy would do it for a third time.

“Come here.” Technoblade grabbed Tommy mid-float, pulling him to stand on Techno’s boots.

Tommy really didn’t weigh *anything*. Techno should stock up on some hearty meals for the future. Maybe some blubber seal meat, that could help him put on some weight. Tommy balanced on his shoes, and Techno grabbed his wrists in both hands, pulling them up and around in a circle. A mimic of what Techno was going to do next.

“Follow my movements. Try and lean into what I’m doing.” He said, and then began to bend. The water under the ice surged and shot them forwards, down the river at a rapid pace. The wind rushed past them both. And Tommy let out a surprised whoop of joy.

Technoblade grinned. Feeling the power of his bending, the ease of which his element responded to him, the small thrilling delight that every bender got when they were with their element.

The kid adjusted almost instantly, flowing like the water. Some of his movements were jerky and that was to be expected. But he moved when Techno did, thankfully the motion to propel the both of them was repetitive. And after a few cycles, Tommy was used to it. Dragging his arms in circles, shifting back and forth with Technoblade like a whirlpool.

“*I love this!*” Tommy hollered above the wind, looking up at Technoblade with utter glee.

Ah.

It was that exact moment that Techno realized he was very attached to the gremlin child. And he would kill to keep that happiness on Tommy's face.

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The fire was burning low when Tommy stirred. The thick warm coat draped around him kept him warm, even in the chilling night air. But something was off. The wind tugged at his hair to get his attention.

Technoblade wasn't there. Tommy sat up, glancing around. And he found the waterbender sitting in the dark, just outside of the camp. The crickets chirped, and the moon was full in the dark sky.

Techno was just... sitting there.

Well, it's a good thing that Tommy was in the mood for sitting too. He sleepily stumbled to his feet, swaying to the side and the air buffeted him to keep himself straight. It was cold away from the fire. And Tommy clung to the heavy furs even tighter than before as he shuffled over to where Techno was sitting.

Tommy collapsed next to the man, blinking blearily up at the waterbender. Techno was staring up at the sky. Neither of them said a word.

"You should go back to sleep." Technoblade gruffly said, slowly blinking.

"It's cold." Tommy replied back. He dropped his head onto Technoblade's shoulder, clutching the coat closer.

"I can get you some more wood." Technoblade said.

"No, it's cold for you." Tommy grumbled sleepily, "I have your coat. You don't even have *sleeves*." It was true. The shirt Technoblade wore cut off at the top of his shoulders, exposing his arms to the night air. "I'm sharing."

The air tugged on Tommy's hair, and it was right. Tommy wasn't doing a good job keeping Techno warm where he was now. He pulled Techno's arm up, sliding underneath it and curling close to his chest. For added measure, Tommy opened the coat up and draped the corners of across Techno's lap.

"See?" Tommy mumbled, his hands unconsciously curling up into Techno's shirt to keep him there. "Warm."

"It isn't that cold," Technoblade's voice was deep and rumble when Tommy was this close. "This is a summers day in the south pole. You don't have to-"

"Shh," Tommy buried his head into Techno's side. "It's past your bed time. It's sleepy time for both of us. Silly man."

"I don't have a bed time."

“You do now. You have a traveling companion. And that means bed times.”

Technoblade let out a huff of air, and his arm cautiously rested on Tommy’s back. Holding him close. “I am an adult-”

“Adults have beards.” Tommy replied matter of factly, “and you don’t so you can’t be *that* old.”

Techno laughed, “I see. I’ll have to grow it out then.”

“M’kay. Why are you up anyways?” Tommy asked, “you need to sleep after all the cool bending you did.”

“That was hardly nothing, kiddo.” Techno sighed, and paused. “I can’t sleep. Tui is in the sky tonight.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Waterbenders cannot sleep on the night of the full moon. She calls to us. Typically, the night of full moons are celebrations in the tribe. We all come together, and dine on good food and burn our fires high throughout the night. We do not have books or scrolls in the poles. We pass our history down orally. By sitting next to the fire, and listen to the chief speak to us, we can learn our myths and the stories of our forefathers.” Techno sounded wistful, “with Tui in the sky, and La under our feet, we never felt more connected to our element than those nights.”

Tommy uncovered his face, resting it against Techno’s chest. “Can you tell me one of those stories then?”

“What?”

“The stories of your people? Is there,” Tommy yawned deeply, “any otter penguin stories? It’s the full moon, innit? It’s story time.”

Techno hesitated, and then let out a long breath. It wasn’t a sigh. Tommy peered up at him. He was wearing a ‘I-Can’t-Believe-What-You-Just-Said’ face. He wasn’t angry, though. “You want to learn about the history of the south pole?”

“Yeah? I wanna know things before we get there.” Tommy replied. “It’ll be awesome, right? Traveling companions share stories.”

A pause, “yes, they do.” Techno smiled. Just a quirk of his lips up. But it was the biggest smile Tommy had ever seen him make. “There is a story of an otter penguin. It begins with Koka, son of Mauhu. He was determined to hunt a white otter penguin, but little did he know, the animal was a spirit in disguise-”

Tommy wasn’t certain when he fell asleep. But in the morning, he was still pressed up against Technoblade’s side. Warm and content.

Traveling companions are the best.

The next town was smaller than the last. After Technoblade stopped their cool ice sled thing, they got off and walked for like, *ever*, until they found the next village. Tommy didn't like walking into towns. He touched his bandana just to make sure it was still on. Sometimes it blew off and he didn't notice, and he was scared somebody saw it.

Technoblade kept Tommy close to him the entire time. Which was okay. It was super fine. Technoblade obviously wanted somebody to hold his hand. And Tommy was the *best* traveling partner ever so of course he'd let him hold hands. Everybody got lonely sometimes. And Technoblade was the first waterbender he had ever seen, it must be lonely to be by himself.

"Stay with me," Technoblade let go of Tommy's hand, walking into the town with a hand on his sword. Tommy wanted to look at it closer. But Technoblade gave him the 'You-Will-Be-Stabbed-If-You-Play-With-Sharp-Things' look and Tommy pouted afterwards.

Tommy kept close to Technoblade but then he saw the most magnificent creature! A raccoon cat! Tommy had always wanted one! They had these little tiny paws that look like hands and they were *so cute*. Tommy slowed down and paused to stare at it, then glanced at Techno's back as he walked on, not noticing that Tommy had stepped away.

Tommy couldn't hold Techno's hand for *everything*. He was a big man. And sometimes big men had to go off on their own. He'd find Techno later.

And with that, Tommy bounced away towards the prettiest animal he had ever seen. The raccoon cat lifted its head as Tommy approached it. The garbage bins already ransacked by it. It gave out a low hiss, its ears pinning back and Tommy stopped. He sat on the dirty ground. Not bothered by the muck and trash on the floor next to him.

"It's okay," Tommy said whispered, "I'm going to be your new best friend. I'm Tommy."

The raccoon cat narrowed its eyes at him. Its fur arched on its back and hissed at him. And then it bolted away. Knocking the trash can onto the ground.

Tommy leapt to his feet, "hey wait!" He ran after it, jumping over a fence and into a backyard. The raccoon cat was so fast! "Hey I just want to be your friend! Come here. I won't hurt you!" He ran as fast as he could, but the raccoon cat was sneaky! It doubled back sometimes and Tommy could barely see the ringed tail disappear behind boxes or fences. But eventually he couldn't find it anymore.

Tommy couldn't recall how long he ran for. He had chased the raccoon cat around for like, *ever*. But somehow it escaped. And he was left standing in an empty street. Cobblestone poked at the bottom of his feet, and Tommy was out of breath.

He glanced up at the dull and dirty buildings. And it struck him how he didn't know where he was. Normally he would just airbend up and find where he needed to go. But he couldn't do that here.

“Huh.” Tommy looked around him, turning around in a circle. But there wasn’t any signs pointing him to the market place. There wasn’t even a friendly passerby that Tommy could ask. “Oh well. I guess it’s time to explore.” Tommy picked a random path and skipped down it.

The houses got even dirtier as Tommy passed by. A few men with ‘I-Have-A-Knife’ looks stared at Tommy as he walked by. Tommy stepped quicker after that. He wasn’t afraid. He was smart. And smart people knew to avoid men with knives.

Tommy was staring at a cross roads, trying to decide if he should walk down the left side or the right side when there was a lot of shouting. Men talking loudly and glass breaking and the heavy thud of shoes hitting the stones.

That sounded exciting! Tommy followed the noises until he found a building that looked like it could fall over with just a push of the wind. A bunch of men were inside, and Tommy was wondering what the commotion was when the door opened and a tall guy was thrown out. He landed on the ground, tumbling until he stopped, face first on the cobble.

“Stay out,” a man roared, tossing something angrily onto the guy on the ground. A guitar clanged harshly and out of tune as it hit the stones. “You aren’t welcome here, *bard*.” And then he slammed the door, leaving the guy on the ground.

“That,” the man wheezed, dragging himself off the ground, “is the opposite of what your wife said.” And he laughed, reaching up and smearing the blood off his face. It didn’t work very well. More blood leaked out of his nose and Tommy was pretty sure it was broken. He groaned as he sat up, rubbing at his arm.

He glanced up, meeting Tommy’s eye. “Uh, hi.” He said, blinking in surprise. He had hazel eyes. They were really pretty.

“Hello!” Tommy greeted him. “I’m lost.”

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“What are those things on your face?”

“They’re glasses.”

“What do they do?”

“I can see better.”

“Are you blind?”

“No.”

“Then why do you need them?” Tommy was flitting around the guy, he was just so strange!

“Because I can’t see that good.”

“So you’re blind.”

“No,” the man ran a hand down his face like Techno did when Tommy talked to him too much. He sighs, “I’m getting bullied by a child.”

“I’m not a child.” Tommy blinked, “I’m a big man. The biggest. Ever.”

“Oh?” The guy said, “then why are you so small?”

“I didn’t eat my greens.” Tommy shot back, “why are *you* small?”

The man spluttered, “I’m not- “

“Yes you are.” Tommy sang, “you’re super duper short. The shortest. Ever.”

“I’m taller than you.”

“I doubt it.” Tommy put his hands on his hips. And the man stood up, picking up the guitar by the neck and groaning, putting a hand to his back.

“Are you old?”

“I am *not*. ” The guy said, aghast.

“Then why are you holding your back?”

“I got the shit kicked out of me.”

“Oooh, you said a bad word.” Tommy gasped, stepping back. “Te- uh- um. My traveling companion said that you should wash your mouth with soap.”

“That’s funny,” the man was standing straight now, wincing occasionally, “my brother says the same thing.”

“You have a brother? What’s he like? Is he short like you? Does he have glasses? Is he blind? What is your name? Can you play the guitar?” Tommy was circling the guy, leaning in to poke at him before flitting back.

“I- what?” The guy blinked at him, and Tommy paused, squinting at him. Now that he was upright, Tommy had a feeling he had seen the guy before.

“What is your name?” Tommy asked again.

“What is *your* name.” The guy replied.

“I asked first.”

“I asked second.”

Tommy pouted, and then gave in. “It’s Tommy. Now it’s your turn.”

“I’m Wilbur.” The man held out a hand, and Tommy stared at it. Oh.

Oooooohhh! Tommy remembered him now! It was the weirdo with the fingerless gloves. And he was asking around for Technoblade! And Techno said he didn’t like waterbenders. “Huh.” Tommy said, “goodbye!” And he turned on his heel and fled. He didn’t *run*. Running was suspicious. No, Tommy walked very quickly away.

“Hey,” Wilbur had annoyingly long legs and he caught up to Tommy. “Didn’t you say you were lost?”

“Uh, no?” Tommy lied, “I know where I am.”

“Oh, good. You see, I think I am lost.”

“I’m sorry for your loss.” Tommy parroted back, and then ducked down an alleyway.

“Wait, where are you going? What’s the big rush?” Wilbur the weirdo was following him. And Tommy glanced back at him with wide eyes.

“I don’t talk to strangers.”

Wilbur barked out a laugh, “somehow I don’t think that’s true. You didn’t mind earlier.”

“Uh, I remembered I had to take my pet platypus bear on a walk. I must go now.” Tommy ducked through the streets. “My, uh, father. Will be very angry I didn’t do my chores.”

“I see.” Wilbur mused, still sticking close to Tommy. If only Tommy could fly away right now. “What is your father’s name?” Tommy ducked into another alleyway, but he stopped. The path ended in a stone wall.

“I, uh- um. Shi...fu. Shifu Mangotree.” Tommy stuttered, turning around but finding Wilbur *right there*. He backed away, stumbling on the uneven cobblestones.

“Your father’s,” the words drip from Wilbur’s mouth in disbelief, “name is Shifu Mangotree.” He takes a step closer to Tommy, a shadow falling over his face. Tommy skitters back, his heart suddenly pounding frantically. His back bumps against the wall, and Wilbur doesn’t halt his steady pace until he was leaning over Tommy. His eyes darting up and down, inspecting Tommy. They landed on Tommy’s neck.

“Now,” Wilbur says, “what do we have here?” A tug on Tommy’s throat, as the man pinches the bandana between his fingers. Sliding it down Tommy’s neck a fraction. Revealing a sliver of red blotchy scar tissue.

“Oh, *hello*,” Wilbur purrs, a sharp smile gleaming in the shadows. Blood still slowly trickled down from his nose. The smear of it across his cheeks made the sight ten times worse. “I’ve been looking for you.”

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("Okay, Dummy, what do you do if you get caught by the enemy?" Drista sat on a pump red pillow, playing with the flame on the tips of her fingers.

"Fight them!" Tommy exclaimed, jumping onto his feet.

"With what?" Drista laughed cruelly, "with your little swords? Oh, I know, your *breathing exercises*."

"Shut up," Tommy muttered, clenching his hands tightly. He was so close to firebending! He can make the flame expand higher and hotter, he had yet to create sparks of his own. But he could feel it. Practically tasting the embers, ready to be unleashed as he wills it.

"Listen up, Dummy," Drista mocked him, "I'm going to be a good little sister and tell you exactly how to disarm a man. Maybe you can survive a bit longer just for the guards to save your pathetic little ass. You just pull your knee back and-")

Tommy nailed Wilbur between the legs as hard as he could.

Wilbur wheezed and tilted to the side, giving Tommy enough space to slip past him and back down the alleyway. Tommy *knows* he shouldn't airbend. But his steps were light, barely brushing against the stone as he sped away. His steps were aided by the rush of wind, making him go faster.

There was a groan, and a rumble of stone, and Tommy barely glanced behind him to see the ground *itself* rising up. With a shriek, Tommy scrambled and threw himself behind a building. The rock slamming into the ground where he was moments prior. He didn't waste his momentum, jumping higher than a normal kid could, and over a wall.

The weirdo was an *earthbender*.

Tommy barely took a dozen steps before the wall that he jumped over exploded. Wilbur stood in the dust, a wicked smile on his face. "You think you can run?" He called out, and Tommy barely caught a wave of his arms before the ground beneath his feet jerked.

The air caught Tommy, keeping him from falling over. A tug on the back of his shirt, and he regained his footing enough to duck down another street. He needed to lose the guy. Otherwise Tommy couldn't stand a chance with him.

The buildings got nicer. Cleaner, with flowers outside of them. Tommy barely noticed, but when he heard the mutter of a crowd, he changed targets. The building next to him shuddered, and Tommy was pulled by the air itself by the scruff of his shirt as the side of the building slammed onto the ground.

"Stop running," Wilbur called out, always twenty paces behind. He could move so *fast*. "Come on, I won't hurt you." His words were sharp, just like how Drista's was before she tried to use Tommy as a target.

Tommy did not believe him. Not one bit.

He rounded the corner and the sight of people made him breathe just a bit better. Tommy didn't slow down. He felt the wind pulling on him, begging him to dance and weave. And he complied. The crowd was thick, and Tommy slipped in like a leaf falling and twirling in the air.

Tommy emerged on the other side of the crowd, breathless. He hadn't touched a single person as he flowed through them all.

The ground shook, and a woman screamed. And Tommy took that as his cue to leave.

Tommy ducked and dodged, weaving through the streets and paths. There were plenty of shouts behind him, occasionally the ground trembled, but the weirdo never appeared. Still, it was better safe than sorry. Tommy continued to weave around, jumping down stairs and swerving by trees.

He caught a flash of blue. And Tommy suddenly changed his trajectory. A mountain of a man was stalking the street. A line of tents full of wares were near, and Technoblade had this pinched expression in his eyes. Tommy caught the look of 'Somebody-Has-Greatly-Inconvenienced-Me' on Techno's face when he barreled into the man.

"Techno!" Tommy cried out, and then winced by how loud he was. Any second now, that weirdo was going to show up! And he was evil!

"Where have you been?" Techno grabbed Tommy tightly, but there was no time for that!

"We gotta go." Tommy pulled on Techno. But it was like pulling on a bolder. Huh, usually pulling Techno worked. "The-the weirdo! He's back. And he tried to hurt me. We gotta leave!"

Techno slowly closed his eyes and breathed through his nose. Then with one smooth motion, he threw Tommy over his shoulder, "why do you keep getting into trouble like this?"

"It isn't my fault!" Tommy whined, bouncing up and down as Techno booked it.

"We will talk later." Techno replied curtly, and Tommy fell silent. Techno looked like he needed to focus. And Tommy curled his hands in the coat, gripping onto it for dear life. Angi, being carried like this sucked. The top of Techno's shoulder pressed into Tommy's stomach. It was nothing like being lifted onto the air or being guided aimlessly by a breeze.

Techno raced out of the town, and it took forever for him to slow down and stop. Unfamiliar trees surrounded them. Tommy had no idea how Techno could be so fast. He set Tommy on his feet, and Tommy's balance wavered. He swayed around in a circle before sitting down on the ground. A moment later, Tommy back hit the ground and he was staring up at the sky in a daze.

Bleh. Tommy was never ever gonna do that again.

“Tommy, are you hurt?” Technoblade was leaning over him. Long pink hair spilling over his shoulder and tickling Tommy’s face. Gloved hands were poking at Tommy’s sides. Checking for anything hurting.

“Nooo,” Tommy groaned, “I’m spinny though.”

“You mean dizzy.” Techno grunted out. And Tommy hummed. The light headed feeling was disappearing, and Tommy clambered up back to his feet. But he wasn’t scared. Even though it was kind of scary thinking about what happened. Even if Tommy didn’t have Technoblade next to him, he was protected. The spirits of the air traveled with him. They always warned him and tugged him out of the way.

Tommy knew why. It was lonely to be flying and traveling. The freedom of going where the wind takes you. And yet being so utterly alone. They were thrilled to find Tommy, and he was grateful that they traveled with him.

“Tommy,” Techno had a pinched ‘I-Am-Very-Serious-Right-Now’ look. “I need you to tell me what this guy looked like, okay? In detail.”

“Detail?” Tommy thought back to Wilbur. Techno wanted details... “He is an earthbender. He wore a brown coat. And he’s *super old*. He kept holding his back like it hurt. He’s blind and super duper short. And he’s bald. The baldest.” Tommy paused, thinking it over. Oh yes, that’s right. “And he doesn’t have fingers.”

“He doesn’t have...” Techno trailed off. A thoughtful look on his face. “I’ll keep an eye out for him. If he ever comes near you I need you stay with me. I’ll protect you. And that means, no running off again.”

“But-”

“Do you know how worried I was?” Techno asked, and Tommy felt a sinking pit in his stomach. “I told you to stay with me, Tommy.”

“I-”

“You ran off. I thought something happened to you.”

“But-”

“Why didn’t you listen?” A hint of frustration was laced in Techno’s demands.

Suddenly Tommy felt a flare of icy hot anger. How *dare* he-?

(“Do you ever want to firebend? Then get up, idiot.” Drista was scowling at him. Tommy was laying on the dirt of the courtyard, his breath knocked out him entirely from when she swept his legs out from under him. He stumbled up to his feet, weakly nodding as he struggled to breathe.

Firebenders had to *breathe* first. And that was the only technique he had grasped so far. But why was it so hard to suck in a lungful of breath now?

His legs worked. And they slid apart into a basic kata. Evenly spaced, keeping his balance centered. It felt so wrong. But this was a perfect stance. He had practiced and practiced and practiced-

Drista lunged for him and within seconds Tommy was on the ground. His body curled out his stomach, after Drista had shoved her fist into the soft flesh. A groan tried to escape. But that would be shameful. Even though tears pricked in his eyes, he couldn't shed them. It would be a sign of a coward to cry.

"Why aren't you even *trying*?" Drista was standing over him again. Her face twisted up in a snarl. "Get up, Dum Dum. You can't even do that, then you're nothing."

Tommy was swaying as he got back onto his feet. And then he moved into the stance again. He is a firebender. The Prince of the Fire Nation. He could *always* get up. No matter what happens. He had to.

Sweat budded on his brow. Making his hair damp and stick to his face. The top knot had fallen out long ago, and the curls that fell around his ears stuck like octopus eels to his skull. Drista, on the other hand, didn't have a hair out of place.

"This is a waste of time." Drista flicked a lock of hair over her shoulder. "You clearly don't have what it takes, Thes."

"I can do it." Tommy hoarsely spoke, even as his legs trembled and his stomach churned from where she had punched moments prior.

"No you can't." Drista scoffed, "you know what makes a firebender bend?"

"The blessings of Angi." Tommy had spent hours researching this very question. Always wondering why, he, of all people in the nation, couldn't spark.

"No, idiot. Anybody can have a blessing from the spirits." Drista rolled her eyes. "What makes a firebender bend is *anger*. And you? You're too passive, Thesus. You get slighted, and you forgive within minutes. No wonder the servants of the palace think you are a coward when you forgive them of their mistakes. You are utterly spineless."

"Shut up!" Tommy snapped back, "I can get angry." The words cracked and popped from his dry throat, just the fire he wished he could control.

"Go on then," Drista waved at him to get closer. Under the mask a cruel smile on her lips formed. "*Rage*."

Tommy sucked in a deep breath. And he slowly exhaled, letting the air wash away the anger that burned brightly, but it quickly consumed itself into a wisp of smoke.

He had always been horrible at staying mad.

"I understand." Tommy said solemnly. Looking up to meet Techno's gaze. "It must've been scary without me there to hold your hand. Next time I'll stick next to you. Okay?" He smiled brightly.

Techno's eyes twitched. He let out a long sigh, putting his head in his hand. "As long as you stay with me, understood." He grumbled.

"I mean, I'll *try*." Tommy nodded solemnly.

"You'll try."

"Yep."

Techno let out a long sigh, glancing over at his bag. Tommy followed his longing gaze. A coiled up rope sat neatly on top of the new supplies he bought. Tommy tilted his head, frowning.

"What's that for?"

"Nothing." Techno grumbled, but Tommy knew the 'I-Am-Avoiding-The-Answer-To-This-Question' look.

"Then why did you get it?"

"Because."

"Because of what?"

"Just... *because*."

"That doesn't mean anything."

"It's rope kid. It's useful for anything."

"I told you. My name is *Tommy*. Not kid."

"I heard you the first time."

"Then why-?"

.

i think i wrote when phil and tommy meet but its basically phil going "oh hey techno brought you for me to kill :)" and tommy going :fear: and blasting phil off of the southern air temple and techno rushes in like "DONT KILL-" but its too late and phil pops back around the corner and goes: OMGGGGGG!! and he's a bit crazy and a lil murderous but he basically uses airbending to keep tommy close and safe next to him :) it ends happy hahahaha. :)

Also wilbur is bashed. a lot. did that before it was cool.

Chapter End Notes

im still alive and im still kickin, babay

HP AU

Chapter Summary

30k of HP Au being dropped lol

As for the whole drama with Wilbur, fuck that guy. I'm with Shelby 100%. I have only written Wilbur as the character he played as, Wilbur Soot. Not as the Content Creator William Gold. I do not support the CC. Whatever fics that do have Wilbur will either be edited to remove him as a main character (regulating him as a side character), or I shall be ending the fics prematurely.

Also fuck JKR for being an utter bitch.

Chapter Notes

TW for violence, angst, unhealthy behavior ect ect i think you all know by know my whole writing schtick

AS A WARNING, there is a snippet of where I was toying with the idea of Sally cursing/bespelling Wilbur into a relationship and its only discussed as how Tommy can prevent this. If this makes you uncomfy then when the notes say "Unsure About This Bit" you can skip it. It doesn't go into any real detail. and it's resolved fairly quickly.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I'm still writing hp (technically) so this voids any baby writing crimes I may have committed.

Tommy heavily sat down on a white bench, void of color. His breath leaving his lungs- did he have lungs here? He was stunned. His ratty jeans that were just a touch too long, leaving the bottom cuffs barely hanging on by a thread from the amount Tommy had stepped on them. His beaten up red sneakers were the only bright color in the bright white world. And he stared at them, unable to actually comprehend what was happening.

Tommy died.

Again.

Except this time, he wasn't accompanied by Callahan, and there wasn't a screaming infant under a bench. The train station was simply that- an empty platform with only Tommy on it. He was the only splash of color. The dirt on his jeans fell off, marring the perfectly white world he was now in.

He died.

Again.

Tommy couldn't comprehend it. His thoughts were swirling around in his brain, but none of them were working. If Ranboo was here, he would surely be able to snap Tommy would of the despair that was choking him. If only he could lean on his friend again, just this once.

The peaceful white world was without a single sound. It made the shouts of anger and hatred still ringing in Tommy's ears louder. He hadn't done anything *wrong* this time. Tommy had to bite back the hysterical laughter that threatened to burst out of him. He put his head in his hands, feeling the bruises on his wrists ache.

He died.

Again.

They threw him into the veil. It hadn't been a *real trial*. When Tommy was summoned for a minor trial at the ministry, he didn't think anything more about it. One of hundreds of trials that Tommy had attended, weeding out the Death Eaters. Vouching for some, while condemning others. He was the Boy-Who-Lived, or well, Big-Man-Who-Vanquished as the Prophet was calling him now. He didn't think twice of it. Not until the Aurors surrounded him as he walked into the ministry.

He had been pulled into the same room his former trial had been in during his fifth year. The judge was different, but the parchment in the hand of the minister condemned Tommy. Callahan betrayed Tommy. The wise old wizard that Tommy had looked up to his *entire life*, stabbed him in the back from beyond the grave.

He told the ministry about the horcrux that once lived in Tommy's head. It was gone now. Tommy walked into the forbidden forest to his death, but Callahan didn't know if Tommy was willing to die so he made a back up plan. It was for the 'greater good.' Fuck him. They thought Dreamon's soul shard still lingered in Tommy. And they didn't listen to him as Tommy tried to explain-

Within an hour of Tommy walking into the building, he was being dragged towards the Department of Mysteries. Black and blue handprints were beginning to stain Tommy's arms as he watched, and he couldn't stop the gut punch that stole the breath from his lungs. He curled up into a ball on the bench, covering his eyes with his calloused and dirtied hands.

He was going to work on the garden. He just bought some new plants and he had spent all morning ripping out the dead roots and rotting vines from the Nevadas family estate. There was a small patch of cursed dead dirt Tommy had been determined to bring back to life and-

Those plants were going to die. The new ones he had just bought- they were going to wilt. Who was going to water them now? Ranboo and Tubbo were on their honeymoon, Tommy had pushed them out the door practically begging them to take a vacation and to stop hovering-

Tubbo was never going to stop blaming himself for leaving, wasn't he? They were going to find out that Tommy died and-

It wasn't their fault. It wasn't their blame to take. Tommy wanted to shake Tubbo one last time and tell his stupid stubborn ass not to take it hard. It was Callahan. It was the ministry. It was the wizarding world as a whole that still backstabbed and took everything from Tommy.

He did everything to save the world. He *died*. He walked into the forbidden forest and whispered to a snitch that it was over. He got to see his mother and father, and they stayed with him as he walked into the snakes den.

And they still killed him the second they had a excuse to do so.

It hadn't even been eight months since Tommy defeated the Dark Lord Dreamon, and here he was, following the man's footsteps. Dead.

He had just turned eighteen two weeks ago. The memory of his friends screaming happy birthday at him, surrounding him as he blew out the candles. Eryn howling with laughter as he held up a camera, the light flashing brightly as it took a memory and made it a permanent reminder of the moment. Tubbo and Ranboo next to him like always, their hands clamped on his shoulders like he would somehow vanish without them looking. A real fear that plagued the three of them. (It came true. It came true. How could Tommy stop them from feeling the guilt that would eat up their insides and consume their thoughts- a new nightmare that would join the long list they already had. How could Tommy let them know that they shouldn't blame themselves?)

Tommy was going to try his hand at living, for once. He was going to try and retake his eighth year at Hogwarts. Maybe get his NEWTS in something, Merlin knows what, and-

He's *dead*.

(Again.)

Tommy had his whole life ahead of him. The war was over, the wizarding world was starting to heal. Yes, it was horrible. But he was out of the worst of it. He could finally do what he wanted to do, without worry that a dark lord would be lurking around every corner.

He wanted to see the world. He wanted to visit America and watch the sun set at the grand canyon. He wanted to see a Thunderbird. He wanted to join his friends as they traveled without Death Eaters ready to jump out at them.

And now it's all gone.

Tommy couldn't even comprehend the amount of experiences stolen from him.

The world around him trembled. And it took Tommy a long moment before he realized it wasn't the train station, it was him that shook. He couldn't cry. He stopped crying long ago, when he held the small body of Shroud, the loyal house elf who followed him to the ends of the earth.

Or maybe it was when Tommy watched his godfather Quackity fall through the same veil he was tossed through.

Or maybe when MD was killed in front of Tommy in the graveyard, the hiss of Dreamon still ringing through Tommy's head ("*kill the spare*, "). He lost the ability to cry, but that didn't stop the agony that cut deep into his chest.

It was over.

The end.

Tommy was at the end of his story.

And then he heard the gentle click of heels on the stone.

Tommy was on his feet in a second. Fumbling for his back pocket, but his wand wasn't there. He always got hell for sticking it in his back pocket but at least he *knew* where it fucking was. But it had been stolen away, like everything else.

Instead of being intimidating and ready for the next fight, Tommy was holding out a hand and looking like a dumbass. The woman dressed in a black dress didn't remark on it. Instead her heels clicked on the stone as she came closer.

"Hello," she says, only a smile visible behind the dark veil, the rest of her features obscured. It reminded Tommy of the arch of stone he had been thrown into. The darkness swirling like smoke. Fitting for it to be called the veil of death, when she herself wore one.. "It's good to see you again, Tommy."

"Death." The word punched out of Tommy, leaving him empty and breathless. He sat back down on the bench heavily. All of the energy gone again.

The woman, Death, sat down next to him. Her lips dropping the smile, "you can call me Kristin, Tommy. I am sorry to say, that seeing you here isn't exactly a surprise."

"I was always meant to die?"

"Yes and no." Kristin tilted her head, the black pearls swooping across her neck clicking with the action. "Everybody is meant to die. You all come back to me. But you were destined."

"Then..."

"Why now?" Kristin sighed, "your world was always going to kill you. If you hadn't gone to the ministry this morning, then they would have Aurors outside your home. They would have staged an attack and blamed it on the missing Death Eaters. And if that hadn't worked, in a month you would've been given a deadly poison with no cure."

“There was no way for me to just... *live*?” Tommy put his head in his hands for it to stop spinning.

Kristin only replied, “I’m sorry.”

Tommy closed his eyes and held his breath. Letting it out after a few seconds. And then doing it again. Kristin didn’t say a word as Tommy’s world melted down. She must be very good at letting people come to terms with things, figuring she was death.

After a few minutes, Tommy raised his head. He wiped away the damp spots on his face quickly. And Kristin didn’t remark on it.

“I don’t suppose you come and greet every soul like this.” Tommy’s voice was rough from grief.

“I think you know the reason why.” Kristin replied, and Tommy wanted to bury his head in his hands again.

“I destroyed them.” The Hallows.

“Just one. The other two are around, are they not.”

“It was just a myth.”

“There is always a hint of truth in myths,” Kristin replied, “I have to admit, the brothers didn’t cheat me. But the deathly hollows are real.”

“I threw them away. The stone is gone. I put the cloak in my vault. The wand is broken-” Tommy was protesting, but he felt it. A weight in his pocket that he didn’t have before. Settling itself in his possession. “*No*.”

“They bonded with your soul, Tommy.” Kristin sighed, “not even I could rip them from you now.”

“I- no.” Tommy dug his hand into his pocket. Touching the silvery texture of his fathers cloak. He pulled it out, the fabric twisting and shimmering in the white light of the train station. “No.”

“It’s yours-”

“I don’t want them.” He pulled out the wand and the stone. The wand that took so many *fucking lives* sat in his palm. Buzzing in his hand to be *used*. The whispers from the stone were, thankfully, silent.

“I cannot take them,” Kristin said, “but you can have them in the afterlife. They will be blessed boons to have.” Her hand was surprisingly warm as it cupped around his, closing his fist around the wand. “The hollows will help you-”

“No.” Tommy interrupted her. He looked up into the dark veil, with tears in his eyes. “You said you can’t take them. But I can *give* them back. They are yours. They belong to you.

They always have. Nobody deserves to own them.” And he pushed the items into Kristin’s hands.

Kristin looked down at the three items in her hands. And a soft smile, one that Tommy hadn’t seen before, appeared on her face. It was nothing like the smile he had seen before. There was a pop, and the deathly hollows burst into black fire. They crumbled in seconds. Leaving nothing behind, not even ash.

“You are very sweet, Tommy.” Kristin said, still looking down at her empty palms, “nobody has ever done that before.” There was an odd note in her tone.

“They should.” Tommy sniffed, wiping away at his eyes with his worn out sleeve. “All women are queens. ‘Sides, they were yours anyway.”

Kristin let out a peal of bright laughter. The white walls grew brighter. The whole world was almost sparkling. Tommy blinked, wondering why his eyes weren’t hurting. Before remembering that he was dead.

“You...” Kristin said between laughs, “are *perfect*.”

“Thank you.” Tommy grumbled jokingly, “I always told my friends I was but they never believed me.” A pang of loss hit his heart. He’d never get to joke with Tubbo or Ranboo again. Clearly they will be missing out. After the shock started to wear off, Tommy was finally accepting he was dead. Well, when his friends die of old age, he can tell them every joke they missed out on.

Kristin’s laugh petered out. Changing from something light and airy to something... *sinister*. The hair on the back of Tommy’s neck stood up.

“You’re perfect.” Kristin repeated again, this time more to herself than to Tommy. And the veil shifted. The dark smoke breaking apart for just a second. Letting Tommy get a glimpse of *something immense, so final, the very end, there is no escape. The stars will burn themselves out, long before death tires of her job. She is the Final. And there is nothing past her-*

He blinked. His face was pressed up against silk. A warm hand running through his hair. What... what was he doing again?

“Are you back?” Kristin asked above him, and Tommy finally realized he was laying with his head in her lap. “Sorry about that.” Her fingers brushed up against his ear, tucking a lock behind it. “Sometimes I get a little carried away. You have such a pretty little young soul, Tommy.”

“What?” Tommy croaked, staring up at her covered face.

“Do you know the theory behind the multiverse, Tommy?” The words were vaguely familiar. Ranboo must’ve talked about it, but it wasn’t something Tommy knew by heart. Kristin’s smile grew softer, and she played with a lock of Tommy’s hair idly. “There are so many worlds just like your own. But with key differences. In some worlds, you might have red hair

like your mother. A simple change, that didn't change your fate. Or, in other worlds, Callahan might have died to the previous dark lord, XD."

"I don't-" Tommy croaked, he didn't *understand*.

"Shush." Kristin rested a finger against his lips. "There are many Tommy Minecraft's out there. All of them are Fated to fight against Clay Taken. And when they die, they come to me. Some of them gained the hallows. And some did not. But none of them gave them back to me."

Her fingers brushed up against his forehead, lovingly. Tommy couldn't help but press his face into her touch. She let out a happy sigh, "I usually give you a choice, Tommy. Sometimes you chose to stay dead, and others I will give them a chance to live again. Fate was cruel forcing you to die after they used you like a puppet. You didn't have a chance to live, forced on the path of a Chosen One."

"I can go back-?" Tommy asked hopefully, but Kristin shook her head.

"Your time in your world is over. Tommy Minecraft can't live in your universe. But there are others that never had you. And I could send you there." Kristin brushed her thumb over Tommy's temple. "But I have a special place for you. A world where Clay Taken never existed. There was never a first wizarding war. Where you can live your life without any conflict. It will be peaceful, Tommy."

"You said I normally had a choice." Tommy whispered, "can't I stay here?"

She paused. Then Kristin sighed, her head dipping slightly, "I wanted you take this opportunity with your own free will."

"You're going to make me do this."

"Yes."

"Why?" Tommy could feel his eyes burning up again. "*Why ? I'm tired*, Kristin."

"I know." She sighed, "I know you are. But you are the gem I've been looking for, for an *millenia*. You will not be alone, Tommy. You will be *loved*. You won't ever have to worry about the next fight again. You'll have your family."

The tears burning in his eyes stung. Even so, Tommy *longed* for it. What lonely orphan boy didn't want a family? Still, "there has to be a catch. There always is." Tommy's voice cracked.

"This is a different world, Tommy. Power always has to balance. There were no Dark Lords to fight wars. There is... a different one. But you do not have to fear him. He only does good work."

"The only good Dark Lord is a dead Dark Lord." Tommy covered his face with his hands.

“Not this one.” Kristin said, and then she sighed again. She did that a lot. Sighing. “I’ll give you a choice. You never had one before, and I can’t do that to you again. You can decide for yourself if you want this family. I’ll put you on the outskirts, so you can take your time and decide if you want them. But know this,” Kristin leaned down, and whispered in his ear, “they will *always love you*.”

Then she gently kissed his forehead, and the world went *black*.

.

.

The worst part about being thrown into an alternative universe, was that apparently, Kristin had a sense of humor. When Tommy woke up, it was fucking disorienting. He thought it was because he was a soul before and now he had a body again. He couldn’t shake the unease that something was off.

It turns out, something *had* been wrong. For instance, Tommy’s *age*. He wasn’t the (if you asked him) tall, ruggedly handsome man he had been. Eighteen years of age was still an adult, if a young one. No, he wasn’t even that anymore.

Tommy had forgotten how scrawny he had been before going to Hogwarts. His aunt and uncle didn’t care to feed him often. And it hadn’t been until he had unlimited access to Hogwarts kitchen he was able to gain some of the weight back. He would never grow as tall as his father had been, but at least he wasn’t a twig.

Now that skinniness was back. Along with his youth. Tommy peered into a mirror and only saw a *child*. Only his eyes spoke of his age, tired and wise. But his eyes weren’t going to be the thing to bring in the wives. He was fucking... *young!!!* Nowhere did Kristin say, “oh by the way you will be a ten year old again.” Fuck *that*.

It wasn’t like he had a choice coming here. But Tommy was sure, that whatever Kristin was, be it a God or timeless entity, she definitely heard his prayers cussing her out. Good. And she would get so many more complaints in the future. Especially *where* she had dropped him off at.

The faded old sign of *Esempi Orphanage* was still legible. His clothes were smaller versions of the ones he wore before getting tossed into the veil. A ragged threaded sweater knitted by Tubbo’s mother, a pair of jeans. The only good thing he wore was the high end dragon skin boots Ranboo gifted him. Sneakers couldn’t compare to the comfort of magic shoes.

The door opened, and a woman with a sour expression looked down at Tommy. There was a slightly glazed look in her eyes, the sign of mind magic, and she ushered Tommy into the orphanage. Acting like he had lived there his whole life, instead of arriving on the doorstep with a new face.

The children never took notice of him. The matrons only talked to him to do chores. Tommy didn't care about the work, he had kept his aunts and uncles home spotless before. It was midsummer. Tommy caught the date on a newspaper, and nearly had a heart attack.

It was 1977. Three years before Tommy was even *born*. What the fuck?!

That night, Tommy told Kristin *exactly* what he thought of her scheme. Sending him to an alternate universe in the *past*? Merlin, he wished he could've stayed dead. But Kristin never responded to his prayers, and Tommy was certain she was listening with that shitty smile on her face.

He was tired. He already *went* through puberty. He didn't need to be ten again. He didn't *want* to go to school anymore. He was going to be put in with a bunch of firsties again and he will have already learned everything they will teach him. He was going to have to experience life all over again and he simply didn't have the patience.

Tommy got over it after a few weeks. It wasn't like there was a magic potion that allowed him to be a grown man again. The only solution was to wait. And living in the orphanage wasn't half bad, if a bit lonely. The few times the kids actually talked to Tommy were to ask about the scars that ran up and down his arms. Tommy lied and said it was from a car accident, and the kids left it be. But every single one of them was a memory of his... past life?

Kristin might have stuck him in his ten year old body, but the scars from the war still lingered on his skin. Tommy had lived with them for most of his life, so he didn't care. The one from the basilisk on his arm was thick and ropy. While the other, a thin straight line, was from when his blood was stolen in a graveyard. *I cannot tell lies* was on his wrist, right over his veins. A reminder to never give up.

They were the only things from his past that came with him to this world. And Tommy ran his fingers over them to remind himself that he hadn't been dreaming. All of this was real. Everything had happened. And he wasn't in the mental ward in Saint Mungos.

Three weeks after arriving in the new world, Tommy's eleventh birthday came and went. And soon after that, the letter arrived.

Mister. T. Innit

Third Bedroom on the left

Esempi Orphanage, London.

The parchment was aching familiar in his hands. And Tommy didn't blink at the new name, he clutched at the letter. He had ached for the wizarding world the past few weeks. The muggle world was... empty. He would find a semblance of home in the wizarding world. It was notorious for never changing. Keeping fashion styles from the 16th century alive by sheer willpower.

Tommy wrote back his acceptance letter, and it took another two days for a professor to appear.

It was a woman he had never seen before in his life. Even so, Tommy stared up at her with shock. He couldn't stop staring. He knows he is being rude. But he hadn't seen a witch with *horns* before.

Professor Puffy smiles down at him, like she knew what he was thinking. The horns curling out of her split colored hair to frame her face. Traditional robes marking her as a witch, but Tommy had lived and breathed in the wizarding world for the past seven years and he had never seen somebody like her before.

Is this one of the differences between his world and this one?

The matron didn't glance at Professor Puffy. She acted like nothing was wrong. But Tommy was wide eyed.

"Hello, Mister Innit," Professor Puffy said with a gentle smile. "I am here to tell you about something truly *magical*."

.

Tommy stepped into Diagon Alley, and was hit with a wall of magic. It blinded him completely. Puffy stepped out from behind him, gently putting a hand on his back to push him forward. He stumbled for a second, before getting his bearing and moving out of the crowd of people who surged past him.

"It's beautiful, isn't it." Puffy smiled, "welcome to the wizarding world."

It was stunning.

Tommy had thought the first time he visited Diagon Alley to be breath takingly amazing. But this couldn't even *compare*. First off, there were hundreds more people in the crowd. Faces Tommy couldn't even hope to recognize. People with weird animal additions, like Puffy's horns, walked alongside with witches and wizards without a complaint.

Puffy had explained that they were called *hybrids*. A magical type of gift that would appear when a witch or wizard grew older. She mentioned that magic itself blessed those with hybrid affinities. They were considered a sacred aspect of magic.

Tommy couldn't believe it. Even watching as a man in a top hat strolled passed with antlers sticking out of the top, he couldn't believe it. The blood purist war had never happened. Wizards and witches didn't fight over their ancestry. Tommy had shyly asked if people would look down on him for coming from an orphanage, and Puffy had gained a strange look in her eye, before responding in the negative.

Tommy had wanted to ask more, but he felt a shiver of magic crawl up his back. He sat with his back straight. He recognized it. The chilling but warm magic of Kristin. And he didn't ask

any more questions, as Puffy clapped her hands together and asked if Tommy wanted to go shopping.

Kristin was doing something in the background. Tommy didn't know what. But she was doing *something* to Puffy.

He sent her a quiet prayer of, "what the fuck?" And the magic tickled him fondly before fading away.

Puffy held out a hand, and Tommy took it. Keeping a tight hold onto her even as they apparated to the pub in London. Tommy swayed from the harsh magical transportation, but he didn't fall flat on his ass. It had been a smooth ride, in comparison to some of Ranboo's apparitions.

If Death Eaters were firing curses at your nerdy friend who was the only one who was old enough to apparate without setting off alarms, the apparition was always going to be bumpy.

Puffy kept Tommy's hand in hers as she guided them through the throng of people. Tommy's eyes were darting around. Noting the vast amounts of differences he saw. For one, the streets were so much larger than before. Gone was the cramped streets, lined with towering buildings. Instead, they were wide and open. Allowing the massive amounts of people to flow through. Dozens of shops Tommy had never seen before lined the streets. His eyes lingered on the broomstick store. The shop window crowded by kids his size and age, oohing and awing over the newest edition.

Puffy brought him to the one building that didn't change in the slightest. Although there wasn't a hole in the top, when Tommy had broke out with a dragon, Gringotts was the same. White pearly marble pillars glistened in the light. And the same challenge was written in gold on the wall. Warning thieves away.

"This way, and try not to stare. Goblins can be very testy." Puffy muttered to Tommy, and he nodded. He was extremely aware of his muggle clothes all of a sudden. It was a clear mark that he wasn't pureblood. But again... that didn't seem to be an issue in this world. Even so, Tommy didn't spot anybody else wearing jeans. Thankfully, nobody else seemed to think it was weird.

Puffy led him to the front of the bank, where a teller was disinterestedly weighing a stack of rubies on a scale.

"Hello," Puffy held out a worn key, "I have a new addition to the Hogwarts Scholarship Fund."

"Name," the goblin didn't look up from the rubies.

"Theseus Innit." Puffy remarked, causing Tommy to look up. He had always used Tommy. His full name might've been Theseus, but it had rarely ever been used. It had always been Tommy Minecraft, Boy-Who-Lived, Pain In The Ass.

The goblin eyed the key over, before reaching behind the desk. It removed a small pouch and handed it to the professor. "Tell your headmaster to stop giving out free money to the poor. It sets a bad standard."

"I doubt he will." Puffy replied with a smile, and goblin huffed and waved her away.

Tommy followed her as she left, the bag in hand. "Now, Mister Innit, let's do some of your shopping. I have been told I am very good at sniffing out the deals. So lets hope I can leave you with a few knuts for spending money for the school year." She winked at him, and Tommy trailed after her.

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Tommy left Diagon Alley with four sets of second hand robes, far more textbooks he recalled getting in his first year, a trunk, a ridiculous amount of ink and parchment, potions items, a galleon, three sickles, and a wand.

To be exact, *his* wand.

The very wand that broke in his hands after the Death Eaters attacked. The wand that he fixed with the Elder wand, and still had issues performing basic tasks. He would banish the dust, and instead find himself lighting the drapes on fire.

But this wand had never been snapped. The wood gleamed in the light, gently polished. There were no nicks or bumps in the wood after a few years of carelessly brandishing it around. And it was... *his*. Pure, and whole. Holly with a phoenix feather. And it was beautiful as ever.

Tommy clutched it to his chest. Even after the wand maker, still barmy and old as ever, leaned forward to peer at him. Muttering the familiar phrase, "*how curious. I sold the brother of that wand to a boy very similar to you.*"

That didn't help Tommy's paranoia. Did Kristin lie? She had said that Clay didn't exist here. But she was Death and she could lie about everything and still throw Tommy into the middle of things.

This world might be different, but liars were universal.

Clay could be in some corner of the world. Plotting his revenge against the wizarding world as a whole. And Tommy was helplessly stuck as a child. How could he save people when he was a little more than a first year?

Tommy stopped in his tracks. A woman behind him nearly running into him. She muttered a curse, but Tommy didn't care. His eyes wide, staring into nothing.

He *didn't* have to save anybody.

Tommy was... a nobody. Just another wizard on the street. He was eleven years old. The most he had to stress about was what *house* he got into at Hogwarts. He didn't have to fight a war. He wasn't the Chosen One.

He was... Tommy Minecraft. And that's all he ever had to be.

The revelation was earth shattering. It stole his breath away. He couldn't believe it. He didn't have to stress about *anything* .

Puffy came to a stop next to him, "what's wrong, Mister Innit? Is something the matter?"

Tommy's voice failed him the first time he tried to speak. He wiped hastily at his wet eyes, before giving her a smile. "I can't believe it, you know? Magic."

Puffy's eyes grew foggy, but she smiled. "Of course, Mister Innit. It really is something to take in."

"You can call me Tommy." Tommy replied.

"Tommy?" She blinked, the foggy look vanishing from her eyes, "oh what a unique name. It's positively muggle." She laughed. "Is that your nickname? I have to say, I prefer your full name. A proper wizarding name, Theseus. Are your parents one of those families who think it's popular to name their children muggle names?"

Tommy was speechless. He was missing something. Puffy had just pulled him out of an orphanage. Instead of fighting it, he nodded. His mind whirling. He didn't want to draw too much attention to himself.

"Well, this is the end of our trip, Mister Innit." Puffy pulled out an envelope from her sleeve. "This is your ticket for the train ride. Remember to advise your parents that apparition on the platform is banned, we recommend using the floo ten to fifteen minutes before the train leaves. It gets very busy near the end. People tend to think they can have a lazy morning before school starts, but I think getting their early is better. I hope to see you in my house, Mister Innit."

"You're in... Hufflepuff?" Tommy guessed with a smile, taking the parchment.

Puffy smiled gracefully, "no. Ravenclaw. I'll see you at Hogwarts. Enjoy the rest of your summer." And with a pop, she vanished.

Leaving Tommy outside of the entrance of the pub. He blinked. "Wait," he looked around him, finding nothing familiar around him. "I don't know where the orphanage is."

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So it turns out that the reason why were isn't any muggleborn vs purist agendas these days was because there simply *were* no muggleborns.

Tommy delved into his textbooks after returning from a long day of traveling the streets of London. A taxi man ended up giving him a free ride home, after Tommy wearily explained to him that he had been abandoned by his guardian and they told him to go to an orphanage. He suffered through the man's outrage at a child being tossed to the curb, and he wished the kind muggle a good day. Of course, the man never offered to take Tommy in. But life was life, and not everybody could take another mouth to feed.

Of course, the wizarding world was of the different opinion. Tommy dove for the history textbooks. He didn't recall everything perfectly like Ranboo did. His friend could probably point to a passage about Ulfric the Oddball and pinpoint the exact divergence of their two universes. Instead Tommy had to piece together a rough outline of where he thought the two worlds split off.

That is, *if* the two worlds were even connected to each other in the first place.

The biggest sign Tommy picked up immediately was the Muggleborn Act of 1504. The ministry declared that they were going to separate themselves further from the muggles. The question for magical children born to muggles came up. And the ministry shrugged their shoulders and said, "eh, we'll take them too." Any child who showed signs of magic born to muggles were taken from their cradles as infants and given to wizards and witches who couldn't have children.

That was the broad gist of it. There were a lot more laws about it. But Tommy felt sick reading it. Muggleborns like Ranboo were taken from their loving parents. Tommy had met Ranboo's parents one summer, a pair of dentists who were so proud of their son's intellect. This law meant that Ranboo would never know his real parents, instead he'd be raised by strangers.

Tommy hadn't been the only one who grew a conscious about it. Fifty years prior a movement rose up, muggleborns had protested being taken away from their biological families. Some said they had been abused by their guardians for not being blood related.

Tommy's heart jumped when he read the name P. Minecraft in the book. An ancestor of his? A great grandparent he didn't know he had? If P. Minecraft was still alive, he'd be fucking ancient by now.

They weren't his relations. They were strangers in this new world. But the helpless little orphan boy in his heart couldn't help but yearn for the family he never had.

-Minecraft enacted a protection program for muggleborns. If a family abused their adopted kid, the ministry would be pinged, and they would save the kid and fine the pureblood family hundreds of galleons. He also enacted more policies at Hogwarts, to screen for any abuse, mental or physical.

The textbook said, "the protestors were happy with the outcome." But Tommy grew up in a world where the victors always wrote the history books. He wondered what happened to those who fought back more against the ministry. He didn't want to know, honestly.

He closed the book and rested his tired eyes. He was never very good at reading. Why read when Ranboo would tell him everything important anyways? Tommy pushed aside the thoughts urging him to fight against the injustices he read about.

He has officially decided that Tommy Minecraft is *retired* from the hero business. He spent his whole life saving others. And it wasn't his business to stick his nose into an ancient law created four hundred years prior.

To the wizarding world, this has always been the norm. They kept away from the muggle world. And they were content to live in secrecy.

Where did that leave Tommy though? He lived in a muggle orphanage. Kristin set him here. To the law, this wasn't allowed. Was this the choice she gave to him? Instead of forcing him to be with a wizarding family that would "love him" she let him choose to stay in the muggle world?

It made sense.

He was lucky she charmed Puffy into thinking he had magical parents. She didn't have to. Puffy could have seen the muggle orphanage and called the Aurors to take him to a new home. The gig could've been up before Tommy even knew it.

This was a secret he was going to have to take to the grave. Else he'd be thrown into a foster home that asked far too many questions about the scars on his arms, or the strange behavior of a soldier in a child.

He was free. Tommy had no choice being thrown into this world. Kristin even said so. But he was free as he could be. No aunt and uncle breathing down his neck. No wizarding parent asking how he knew seventh year spells. No Dark Lord aiming to kill him, he was going to keep far, far away from this world's lord. No infamy following him from his childhood. He was an unknown. A nameless face in the crowd.

He could have an honest shot at life.

It was more than Tommy could dream of. He wished Tubbo and Ranboo were here. He missed his friends. His life. Everything he had worked hard for. But... Tommy was always one to roll with the punches. And he can make do with this.

He just had to survive school again. And then... the world was open to him. He could be a curse breaker. Or an enchanter. Or... *anything*.

For the first time in his life, Tommy was excited for his future.

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Tommy stepped onto the platform nine and three quarters and stumbled, nearly falling into his face. His battered trunk, somehow worse than the one he had in his previous life, clattered to the ground as Tommy stumbled out of the fireplace.

He never liked traveling by the floo. It was just... messy. The powder that was supposed to be burned off during the travel always stuck to his clothes. He couldn't actually tell which way he should exist, and there was more than one time he hit the back of the fireplace instead of the entrance.

Tommy wouldn't have traveled this way. But since he figured that the wizarding world kept themselves far, far away from the non-magical one, that the entrance of the platform in the

muggle train station didn't exist. He didn't want to waste time traveling across London only to find he needed to go back to the Leaky Cauldron and floo in.

The worst part about the floo was the overwhelming magic that invaded his senses. Tommy knew he was overly sensitive to magic. He hadn't known when he was ten, previously, he just thought that everybody could feel it. It hadn't been useful until he had been on the run. It was surprising how quickly he adapted to it. Using it as a warning system for any Snatcher that might be lurking in the shadows to cart them away. Ranboo jokingly called it a "spidey sense" and Tubbo never understood it. Tommy did, barely, but...

Tommy ducked behind a pillar, and scrubbed at his eyes at the thought of his friends. He is *fine*. It's all okay. He didn't need to cry like a baby every time he was reminded of them. He just... got floo powder in them.

It was unfair. To think that Tommy got to have a new life, a new childhood, a place where he didn't have to worry about anything, but Ranboo and Tubbo were stuck with the mess Tommy left behind.

He would have tried to stay and clean up everything. Except he got tossed into the death portal, and Tommy could bet all of his money that the Daily Prophet was practically celebrating his murder.

"Kristin," Tommy whispered, staring up at the ceiling, "you better be right about this place. If I am thrown into a life or death situation before the end of the school year I demand a fucking refund. You hear me?"

There was nothing. Of course. But Tommy figured she heard it anyways. She was Death. And there was no escape from that.

Tommy heard the fireplaces roaring with each new person stepping onto the platform. He had arrived earlier than Professor Puffy had suggested. But his little episode took more time than he thought. And the giant clock hands were clicking down to the departure deadline. When he peered around the corner again, there were almost a hundred more wizards and witches on the platform. Some of them parents, with their younger children in tow, waving goodbye to their kids. Some were helping others float their trunks onto the train. But there were far, far more kids wearing the black robes of Hogwarts Tommy had ever *seen*.

Never, in his six years of school, were there this many. Tommy's own class had been about thirty students. But with a single glance, he caught sight of twice the amount of eleven year olds.

"Funny," Tommy muttered to himself, "how two wars can slim a population down." He swallowed hard, gripping his luggage. Was he ready to be apart of this? One of the crowd? Could he be normal?

He didn't feel ready.

He never did.

Tommy was about to step into the crowd when he caught a flash of wild brown hair. It drew his eye, and Tommy *froze*. Staring like a deer in headlights. The air from his lungs simply *gone*.

Wilbur Minecraft tilted his head back and laughed. The hair falling into his brown honey eyes, before a stray hand swept up and brushed it away.

The window in the crowd moved on. And Tommy lost sight of him instantly. Hundreds of people in between him and the father who died to save him seventeen years ago.

(Tommy was staring into a mirror, eleven for the first time, watching with utter fascination at the people he saw. A man, tall and wearing a Gryffindor scarf, beaming down at him proudly. A woman with long red hair, placing a hand on his shoulder. Her freckled cheeks flushed with joy. The invisibility cloak slipped down his shoulders, unnoticed, as his whole attention was on his parents.

Tommy reached up and touched her hand where it laid on his shoulder. He felt nothing but his pajamas, but if he tried hard enough, he could feel her. His mother, Sally Soot. His father brushed a few tears from his eyes and mouthed the words, *I love you* .

The boy mouthed them back in the darkness in an empty room only filled with ghosts.)

His feet moved him before he could think. The tide of people in front of him were gone. Tommy barely paid attention, tripping over his own feet and bumping into people as he pushed his way to where he saw his-

(The windows iced over on the train. The Hogwarts Express never stopped before, not until they were at the station in Hogsmede. His breath came out in white fog, dissipating in the air.

“What’s going on?” Tubbo reached over and clutched at Ranboo’s robe. “Why have we stopped?”

Tommy couldn’t stop the sense of unease that rose up as the temperature dropped. The locked compartment door flicked open, without any magic. It simply clicked open on it’s own. And a skeletal hand wrapped around the door frame.

A floating black mass of shadows and death loomed over them all. But Tommy couldn’t breathe. His lungs stopped working. He stared into the dark robe as the monster drew closer. Flashes of nightmares- his aunt and uncle shutting him in the cupboard, the basilisk’s fang piercing his arm, the cold laughter of Clay-

The world buzzed and faded away and Tommy saw darkness. *“Please no!” A man was begging, his voice cracking, “please not Tommy.”*

“Move aside, boy.”

“No, please. Please not Tommy. He’s just a baby. Kill me instead, he’s just a baby-” The man screamed.

Cold shrill laughter echoed in the air.

Tommy woke up with the taste of chocolate in his mouth, dazed and pressed up against Tubbo. His friend rubbing warmth into his icy cold fingers.)

Tommy tripped over somebody's trunk, nearly crashing to the ground. It was only from his reflexes from being a fugitive for over a year that saved him. A man yelled at him for getting in his way. But Tommy barely heard it. His heart pounding, his thoughts leaving him, his only goal was to see Wilbur-

("I- I saw him." Tommy sat with Ranboo in the hospital bed, a flushed shocked look on his face. "When the dementors were surrounding us, he- it was-")

"Who?" Ranboo asked, his hair flying up around him in a messy ball. He was still trying to get his bearings, but Tommy couldn't stop himself. He needed to tell *somebody*.

"My father," Tommy breathed, and he couldn't stop the hope and glee that rose up in his stomach, the same feeling he got when he was diving for the snitch. "He's- he's *alive*."

"Tommy-" Ranboo paled, his hand flying up to touch the necklace he wore. The gold chain clicking, "I don't-"

"He was there! He summoned a patronus!" Tommy stood up, his palms hot and sweaty. "He saved us from the dementors! There were *hundreds*. And Quackity couldn't get up-"

"I believe you," Ranboo said, grabbing Tommy's hand. "I do. But-"

The infirmary doors opened, and Professor Callahan walked in. A grave expression on his face.)

His trunk caught on somebodies owl cage. And Tommy paused long enough to detangle the two and mutter an apology at the screeching owl. But his eyes were drifting up. He could see a glimpse. A flash of brown hair next to the train, curly and wild, and his ears were ringing.

("Come on," Tommy breathed, watching as the cloud of dementors fell from the sky. The swam in one direction. Creating a haunting current of soul-sucking demons. "Come on, where are you? Where is he?")

He watched as Quackity collapsed onto the ground. His frail body dragging onto the ground as he tried to crawl away. But he was the target, and the teen next to him was an added snack to the dementors.

Tommy watched himself fall onto the ground. Barely clinging to consciousness. In the distance, a werewolf howled in the forbidden forest.

"Come on!" Tommy's whispered in desperation. A dementor swooped down. Caressing Quackity's scarred face. Another reached Tommy's body, ice starting to form on his school robes.

There was nobody else around. And realization struck. Tommy stepped out, tears in his eyes. And pointed his wand as high as he can. And he dreamed of his father's love, the life he never had, a *family* -

“Expecto Patronum !” He screamed his voice raw, and a his father’s wolf bounded out of the white mist.

It wasn’t until later, Tommy dropped into Ranboo’s arms, sobbing wildly that it wasn’t his father. He was dead. He was gone. It had been Tommy himself, all along. And he just wanted his *Dad*.)

His shoes hit the ground one last time. And Tommy was standing at the back of the train, staring up at-

It was him. It was *really him*. Wilbur. Wilbur Minecraft-Soot. The man that died placing a blood protection on him. Who loved him. His *father*. Alive. Here. Right now. Tommy was meeting him.

Wilbur was laughing with another older student, before turning, catching Tommy’s boring gaze. A faint smile still curling his lips. “Hi! Are you here for some help with your trunk?”

Tommy’s mouth opened and then closed. “I-” What can he say to him? *Hello, I am your son. I am actually eighteen, stuck in a body because Death is a bitch and I am supposed to be dead after the wizarding world betrayed me. I dreamed about you saving me since I was four years old.* No. He can’t say that.

Wilbur took his silence for shyness. “Don’t worry too hard, mate. I know it can be a bit scary the first time going off to Hogwarts! Is your family here to see you off?”

Tommy opened his mouth, and closed it again. “Uh.” *You are my family. You are who I looked up to my entire life. Please. I want you to love me.*

One of the other older students leaned in, “come on Wil, we are needed on the train in a few minutes. Help the kid, we need to get into the prefect meeting.”

“Right,” Wilbur said, and Tommy’s eyes finally focused. Trailing down to take in details he had blindly ignored. A part of him, the piece that was still always on edge after living in a tent in a forest for nine months, slapped and screamed at him for failing to notice it before. He should be better than this. He is, normally. But-

An emerald and silver tie wrapped neatly around Wilbur’s neck made his blood run cold. He was- Wilbur was a *Gryffindor*. He-

Tommy couldn’t help to take in other details. The curly hair wasn’t wild and free like he had seen in the pictures before. Instead, it was artistically placed there. Making him look sleek and polished. The dark wand in his hand, the wood stained nearly black.

The way that Wilbur looked down at him with a clearly plastic smile. (Clay had the same look. Tommy had been too young to see it when he was in his second year. But it was fake. Polished and made perfect. Too polite to be anything but a mask.) Tommy had seen Slytherin’s adopt the same look many times before.

It was a gut punch he never expected. And it hurt more than he thought it could. Finding a chink in his armor and delivering a fatal blow.

"I'm sorry," Tommy whispered, the noise lost to the crowd. Wilbur tilted his head to the side, a single curl falling into his forehead. How many times did he practice that move? To seem sympathetic enough to the masses?

Before Wilbur could respond, Tommy was running away. His boots hitting the pavement. Disappearing into the crowd that he had fought through. Weaving around until he found an open door, and climbed onto the train. Pulling his trunk up with him.

There were no empty carriages. There were always a few every trip, but with the surge of wizards and witches in this world, every compartment was packed. Tommy found one that held a few quieter students and sat hollowly on the seat.

He did not think a single thought the rest of the journey to Hogwarts. Clutching at his robes and pulling them close, staring blankly out the window in shock.

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Wilbur wasn't his father.

It was stupid of him to think like that. He was in a *different world*. His father was in his seventh year. Tommy didn't *exist* here. How could he go up expecting a father when there was just a kid the same age as he was.

After the shock and hurt (why did it hurt like that? Tommy should've known not to make any expectations. They almost never worked out) faded away, he was exhausted. It had already been a long day, and being around the giant crowd wasn't something he found pleasing either. Usually crowds meant they were all looking at him. Judging him. For his worth, his value, his words- but never for himself.

It was just how life was. It was never going to be easy. And Tommy would never let it crush him. It just made him stronger, in the end.

Tommy gripped his clothes tighter. Watching as the train started to slow down, the familiar sight of Hogsmeade in the distance. The rest of the students in his compartment were putting their things away in their bags. Ready to disembark.

Wilbur will graduate after this year. And then their paths will never cross again. That eased the slight ache in Tommy's heart. He won't be faced with the potential 'what-if's' for his whole career at Hogwarts. Albeit, Tommy was aiming to leave Hogwarts as soon as he could.

He was rather impatient, and growing up would simply take too long. It wasn't unheard of for students to graduate early. Ranboo had the opportunity to graduate in their fifth year, but opted to stay.

Tommy had one goal- his retirement. Once he got his NEWTs done, he was going to jump ship. He had always wanted to travel. So why wait? The British Ministry was always going to

be corrupt. And Tommy was tired of fixing their problems for them. He will breeze through this part of his life, and soon, he'll be out of here.

Freedom.

The train let out a long blast of its horn as it crawled to a stop. And Tommy was the last to leave his compartment, patiently waiting his turn to disembark. A pointy hat perched on top of his head, and he barely had to glance around before he saw a tide of first years sectioned off, a teacher holding up a lantern.

It was the same from his first year. The boats were silent across the water, and Tommy kept his gaze off into the horizon. Waiting for the pearly white stone walls of Hogwarts to appear. And she did, lighting up the darkness with her beauty.

(The last time Tommy saw her, her stones were dirty and holes were blasted into her walls. The main hall filled with bodies. Stretching out. Faces Tommy knew well, but names he never learned, silent and still in death. The final battle had taken a hard toll. Tubbo's head was bent low, his hair falling into his face. Crying over the body of his brother.

Tommy couldn't shed a single tear.)

It was odd. To see Hogwarts whole and hearty. Tommy let in a long breath, when he felt the wards wash over him. The magic tickling him slightly as Hogwarts identified him as a student. He was safe here.

The boats finished their ride, and he was just one face amongst many as they were guided in through the imposing doors. It might be a different world, but Hogwarts was still the same. The same pictures. The same hallways. The same *air*.

It soothed a pained part of his soul Tommy didn't know that had been hurting. *Finally*. Something that was familiar. Hogwarts had been his first home. And it will always be.

Tommy was staring off, waiting for when they would be ushered into the Great Hall, trying to think of good excuses to give to the hat to sort him where he wanted to be, when the doors opened.

His wand was in his hands before he realized it. He could feel it. The magic that rose up in the air. Soft and alluring, but pitch black. It hummed with power. And Tommy could feel his own magic rising up to attack, but he stamped it down. Holding it back. Ducking into the many students who turned to the man who walked into the room.

Tommy barely saw a glimpse of him. He was hiding behind others like a coward, but none of the other students seemed alarmed. He saw blonde hair, a deep green robe, and it figures-

The Dark Lord was a fucking Slytherin.

There was always a type of aura that Dark Lords had. Unmistakable. It was different for every one, but it was just... Dark. There is never a hint of light in their magic. Dark rituals taint a wizards magic, until they hit the lowest they can go. Gaining the title that describes

their magic. They needed to do so many dark rituals until their very soul twisted into the darkest night.

They were simply evil.

“Good evening,” the Dark Lord says, and the room falls deadly silent. Tommy is hunched over behind a girl. He wasn’t very tall anyways, but he wasn’t taking chances. “I am happy to see so many new faces here. I would like to welcome you all to Hogwarts for the duration of your schooling. I am so glad you are here, and I cannot wait to see what you will accomplish within these walls.”

Tommy peered out from behind the girl. And he finally got a clear look of the Dark Lord. Golden blonde hair fell down to his shoulders, tied back by a silver ribbon. His robes were of a fashion Tommy didn’t recognize, but they were a deep serpentine green.

He had a kind looking face. The touch of age light, but in all the right places. Wrinkles around his mouth from smiling, a dimple in his left cheek. A small dusty beard lightly framing his face. But what got Tommy’s attention were Dark Lord’s eyes. Vibrantly blue, and somehow familiar.

An unknown face. A new enemy.

The Dark Lord scanned the crowd of children, and Tommy stepped back before his eyes could catch his. Who knew what tricks this man held? He was clearly a manipulator. Tommy could feel the magic pouring off of him. Controlled but curious. Sliding around the feet of the children like snakes, brushing up against their ankles.

Tommy stepped back, away from the questing magic. He knew it was unusual to be sensitive to magic, but did nobody else seriously see this? He glanced around, but everybody else seemed to keep their attention on the Dark Lord. The man talking more, speaking about the houses and shit. All of it was rubbish. He was *doing* something with the magic.

He saw the dark tendrils pause at a child’s foot. Curling around it, leaving... *something* behind. A mark of some kind.

Instinctively Tommy wanted to fire off a dozen curses at the man for whatever insidious plan he was doing. But this wasn’t the time. First off, he was a *kid*. His core wasn’t fully settled at eleven. He’d exhaust himself within the first three spells. What could he do with a powerful Dark Lord.

And secondly... Tommy didn’t *want* to. Investigating would lead to more problems than he wanted to deal with. He was tired. And Kristin said that he didn’t have to fight anymore. Somebody else can deal with it.

Was it selfish to turn a blind eye to it all?

Yes.

Tommy was surprised to find that it didn’t bother him.

He watched as the magic slithered up to him. His own magic wanted to reach out and snap at it. Destroy it. Burn it away. His own magic was blistering white, and it would burn the dark away until there was nothing left.

But that would draw too much attention. It wouldn't even be fifteen minutes before he stepped foot into Hogwarts and he would have a Dark Lord breathing down his neck.

Instead, he curled it tightly into his chest. Keeping it tethered and on a leash. Holding it, even as it burned to attack. And Tommy watched as the Dark Lord's magic slid past his feet. Brushing against the dragon hide boots, and then *stopping*.

His breath hitched. He couldn't pull his eyes away from the scene. The magic reached back to poke at him, touching him briefly. And just like he had seen it before, it curled around his ankle before releasing. Leaving a slight trace behind.

It felt like a shackle. Pulling his foot down. What did it mean? What was this for? Some kind of test? Why was it only picking out a few kids? Tommy kept his head up and he stared at a wall as the Dark Lord said something, and the kids around him clapped.

He joined in, half heartedly, and then the Dark Lord invited them into the Great Hall. Tommy stepped forwards, but felt the lingering magic. It didn't *do* anything. He couldn't feel it sticking to him like a curse. It was just... a slight trace of magic.

He hated it.

Tommy followed the children out. The Dark Lord left, Tommy hadn't really paid much attention. Only noticing the magic leaving as silently as it came. The air was fresh again, but Tommy barely noticed. His attention was fully focused on the thing around his ankle. But since he wasn't under watch, he could do something.

The kids around him were whispering as they were lead to the Great Hall. Tommy took a few steps before leaning down, letting his magic trail up his fingers. With an action that nobody noticed, Tommy swiped his bitterly bright magic across this boot. Wiping away the darkness, and leaving him traceless.

His boot came down as he registered the words, "-Headmaster Minecraft." And Tommy nearly stumbled, his head shooting up at his name.

"Minecraft?" The word slipped out, blinking at the kid who whispered it.

"Yeah! Isn't it great the Headmaster would greet us personally like that? I heard from my older brother that apparently they didn't do that before, but Headmaster Philza Minecraft started the tradition."

"Philza-?" Tommy choked out, and the swirling tide of children swept him away. Tommy knew his grandfather's name. He had seen pictures. But he hadn't even recognized him.

The Dark Lord was standing when Tommy walked into the Great Hall. The room was so much bigger than he remembered it (bodies lining the ground in neat rows, unmoving and

staring up unseeing into the night sky twinkling above them). Now Tommy stared at him with recognition.

It *was* him. The hair was longer. The beard was new. But-

“What the fuck, Kristin,” Tommy breathed in a horrified prayer.

Somehow, this world was just getting worse and worse as the day went on. And Tommy was ready to go back to the train station now.

He didn’t see the sharp blue eyes of Philza landing on the crowd, searching for the one who prayed to his wife.

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Philza’s ears pricked as he heard a whisper carried in the air. A simple gesture, a prayer, meant for his goddess. He heard them all the time, but this was unusual. His sharp eyes landed on the crowd of first years. Adorable and small, budding little children who were only on the first step of becoming powerful wizards and witches.

It wasn’t unusual for somebody to pray to Kristin. What was strange was the contents of the short little message. A disrespectful four word prayer. Most students prayed to the deities of magic for help with their school work. Magic and Knowledge were the most common. The prayers meant for Kristin usually asked their school rival to perish. Those cases were rare and always carefully looked at and mediated. Both parties separated from each other for their own good. Normally, they would address his wife as “All Powerful Death” and *not* by her name.

He tried to pick out who said it, but it was just a voice within a crowd. He scanned the crowd of new faces. Phil had already picked out a few that had felt magically gifted, but this time he tried to look deeper. Catching the eyes of a few girls and boys, but only getting the surface of their thoughts.

‘I hope I can go to Gryffindor.’ A boy thought, and Phil moved on.

‘Mom said she’d disown me if I didn’t go to Slytherin. Sissy said she was nearly placed in Hufflepuff,’ a girl thought.

He tried for another minute, and the crowd grew restless. Finally, he nodded to Puffy. And she called out the first name on the list. A child walked up, and a hat was gently placed on their head.

“SLYTHERIN!” The hat roared, and the boy underneath jumped, and moved hurriedly to the table of snakes. Phil smiled and clapped with the rest of the houses, his eyes scanning again. But once more, there was nothing out of place.

Could the prayer come from an older student? Unlikely, but possible. There were some incredibly old manuscripts that still had Kristin’s name written down. It was likely a student’s

family might have it in their home library. Phil had thought he had done away with most of those, but some always slipped through the cracks.

He hoped it hadn't come from the Ancient and Honorable House of Nevadas. Phil had never managed to get into their library. It would be a shame to put them all to their deaths, their lineage was powerful. Their bloodline curse made them so *fascinating* to watch. Insanity was always a delight to witness.

It would be easy to push them over the edge. Perhaps Phil could spare a few. Wilbur already had the Nevadas Heir in his entourage. He would, of course, have to swear fealty to Philza before he would allow him to live. Although the likelihood of that happening after what Techno did to him in their duel last year was slim.

Still, it was just an idea. If Phil took away Wilbur's toy, he'd have a fit. But his son would listen... eventually. If it was for Kristin, they would do their part. And if it meant sending a few souls to his wife, the more the merrier.

It was such a pity they had to go so young. Phil would have liked to get some use out of them before they met Kristin.

Four more children were sorted. Each going to their houses with a smile and flushed happy expression. And Phil decided he could think about this later. Eventually he would hear another prayer. For now, he would enjoy his favorite part of the school year. Watching the little fledglings go to their new nests.

What unlimited potential each of these children held. Their untold bright futures that just as mysterious as the gods themselves. He loved watching them take their first steps that shaped their future. Their house will shape their lives. Their identities. Who will these unnamed faces become? Will they be allies of his, or go on to live their lives in the rest of society?

There were a few kids that Phil mentally noted their names. As Puffy called out for them to come up, Phil could sense that they were the ones he marked. In a few days, he would send them an offer they couldn't ignore. They would become the elite of the school in the coming years, powerful witches and wizards with the magic to back them. They would be tutored by Philza, personally. They would be a class of their own. His precious disciples, which he handpicked and raised from when they were children.

They were always loyal. Never doubting, never questioning him. Sharper than a razor, and never hesitating to spill blood. Phil's beloved Crows.

It was rumored, of course, how Phil picked them. Families saw it as a high honor to have a son or daughter picked by Phil. It was. They would always become pillars of strength to the community.

Some students thought Phil took them in because of their lineage. Which was partially correct. Sometimes Phil allowed children with the political families into this fold. But only to appease the families, and for a debt to be called on for a later date. But for the most part, Phil picked them because of their magical cores.

He could tell quite a bit from them. Just brushing up against them with his own magic told him enough. He always looked for the ones with pure cores. The three types of magic, light, gray, and dark. Children with a perfectly mixed core, grays, were considered to be the most common. They could use magic on both sides of the spectrum, but they were not as powerful as those who had a purely dark or light core.

There were a handful of children this year. Two, maybe three. Phil didn't recall how many exactly he marked. But that was normal. Phil clapped a little bit more enthusiastically when they were sorted. The line of children was slowly breaking apart, as each of them were sorted to their new homes.

And then a boy was called up. Messy blonde hair and second hand robes. That wasn't unusual. Phil barely glanced at him as the child shyly approached the hat. A second or two passed as the hat was lowered onto his head, dipping over his eyes and leaving only his nose peaking out. Phil tapped on the wood of his armrest. His eyes scanning over the students, idly wondering if he should send a letter to the Minister tonight and let him sweat or surprise him when Phil showed up at his office in the morning.

When the fifteen second mark hit, and the hat hadn't made a noise, it finally drew his attention. Sortings were fast. Quick and to the point. It had to be or else they would spend all night. There were nearly ninety few first years this year, and it was one of the smaller groups they had.

A full minute passed, and Phil leaned slightly forward. Intrigued. A hat stall, how *delightful*. Usually that meant the child could fit into more than just two houses. Phil noted how the boy's lips were moving, whispering so quietly up to the hat that even he couldn't pick up the words.

The hall began to fill with whispers of their own. The students shifting around impatiently. Leaning around each other to look at the child who still sat on the stool. A scowl forming on the boy's lips.

Ah, he was arguing. There were always a few cases where a child wanted to be moved to a house of their preference. Phil hoped he would get a letter from an angry parent asking for the boy to move to another house because of tradition. It depended on how stubborn the hat was tonight.

A second minute passed. And it was more than halfway ticking to the third minute when the hat let out a grand sigh, before dryly exclaiming, "*RAVENCLAW*. There are you happy now?"

"Ecstatic." The boy pulled the hat off and handed it back to Puffy gently, and then scampered off to the table. The houses clapped enthusiastically, most of students glad that the hat stall was over. And Puffy called out the next name.

The boy looked remarkably like Wilbur did at his age. And Phil couldn't help but let out a fond sigh at the memories. Phil had kept Wilbur in his nest, even when he attended his classes here. He would still insist Wilbur stay with him in his personal quarters if Techno had revolted and insisted he stay in his dorms. Wilbur soon followed after, declaring it would only be right if he stayed in his own rooms.

Pity.

Phil stared at the boy. He should've paid better attention to his name. But he hadn't been marked, and he hadn't the energy to memorize every child's name. Already he saw other first years leaning in to ask the boy what the hat told him.

The kid scowled like an old man, ducking his head low and muttering excuses. Phil kept an eye on him, even as the rest of the first years were sorted. The boy was a loner. Perhaps awkwardly shy.

Maybe he had fought his way out of Hufflepuff. It would have made sense. Or perhaps the hat thought it would do him good to be surrounded by bravery instead. There was a shocking amount of socially awkward students sorted into Gryffindor, the hat forcing them to open up.

Or did the hat want him in Slytherin? It wouldn't be the first time that ambition and knowledge went hand in hand. Perhaps... Phil wouldn't know. Not unless he asked the boy himself. The hat kept these things to itself, and refused to talk about it.

Perhaps one day, Phil would know.

The child wasn't a priority, and Phil had many other things to deal with. For now, he had a feast to begin. And a school year to watch over. Children to guide. And most importantly, a Minister to terrify.

A few days later, the odd occurrences had slipped his mind completely. Phil was a busy man, afterall.

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Being around real eleven year olds was jarring, and it made Tommy feel far older than he was. They screamed. They whined. They talked about things that didn't *matter*. Who cared, Janus, that your father forgot to pack your blue sparkly quill. Nobody did. And yet they nattered on and on and on-

Tommy did the only thing he could do. Escape to the library. Ranboo would be shouting in victory. Tubbo would wail like he just lost a quidditch match. But Tommy's nerves couldn't handle the other first years. And the library was the only place that enforced the silence. The librarian sending sharp looks to anybody who so much as breathed loudly.

All in all, it did aid Tommy's goal. He had expected he could breeze through his classes. But it became suddenly clear that a society that didn't have war-sized gaps in their history would flourish. People who might have died went on to make world changing discoveries. History changed. And Tommy might know a fair amount of the curriculum, but not all of it.

A few weeks passed, and Tommy hit the books harder than he ever had before in his eighteen years of life. Turns out, Ranboo had been right about a few things. Learning was... easier

said than done. But Tommy hadn't felt so pleased about being the top of his class before this. It was through his own hard effort he managed to beat a bunch of eleven year olds.

Some classes he breezed by, with no effort. Herbology, transfiguration, and charms were still working on the simple things. Tommy was already working ahead, learning the spells that were brand new to this world, so he could have a head start.

Some other classes, it was completely different. Astrology, for once, actually mattered. Tommy had spent his first two years sleeping through it with Tubbo and copying Ranboo's star charts. He had dropped it when he hit his third year, and could control his schedule. But it turns out, the stars do have meaning. And they were requirements for future classes.

History wasn't taught by a ghost. Instead, they were lectured by a woman who looked older than a hag. Not that Tommy would ever say that to her face. White hair, so fine, that it almost made her look bald. And she *droned*.

Was this the history ghost alternative self? But stubbornly staying alive? Tommy couldn't tell. He struggled in the class. The urge to sleep it all away hitting him. It didn't help he sat in the sunlight, midday, right after lunch.

History in the books was fascinating. But in class, it was boring as hell. He could hear Tubbo whispering to him to just take a nap. He could learn about it later. Tommy hadn't been sleeping very well in his dorm room. He threw up silencing wards around his bed, and hoped they held even when he woke up breathless and his skin crawling.

Tubbo had once said Tommy cried when he was asleep. Tommy never recalled it. He didn't want anybody to start asking questions about him. So far, he was a quiet student that always respectfully answered questions when called upon.

Punz would be rolling in his grave the second a teacher called Tommy "polite." The bitter old potions teacher hated Tommy from the second he was born. In the end, Callahan paid him more than Clay had, and he had died playing both sides like a fiddle.

Tommy glanced up from his book, a thought occurring to him. Did Punz exist in this world? He was in the same year as Tommy's fath- no, Wilbur. Was he still bitter and greedy? Or had he changed as well?

Either way, Tommy had learned from him. Potions was laughably easy. The high standards Tommy struggled to keep up with were gone. Leaving him the neatest of his year group and his potions nearly perfect. The first O on his essay made him laugh until he was in near tears.

Fuck you, Punz.

"Kristin," Tommy whispered, "make sure to tell the old coot I'm still fuckin' better than him."

There was no answer. But Tommy knew she heard. She always did. He bent his head down, and went back to reading in the quiet dark corner of the library. It was the most unused part

of the library. Tommy had surprised that it was allowed to exist- Muggle folklore and mythologies.

Nobody came here. Except another older Ravenclaw. Tommy never said a word to him, and he never said anything back. An unspoken truce between the two of them. They were both hiding from something here.

Did wizards and witches dye their hair in this world? A new fashion trend that Tommy hadn't seen yet? He hadn't seen other people with pink hair before.

It was niggling at him. Tommy was certain he had seen his guy before. And it was just on the tip of his tongue... and then the mystery was solved soon after when Tommy walked into defense. The pink haired ravenclaw had his head bent over a stack of essays, scribbling on them with a red inked quill. He was the teachers assistant.

It was just called Defense on Tommy's schedule. Not 'Defense Against The Dark Arts,' just... defense. Because there is actually a class called 'Dark Arts' that is taught to every student third year or higher.

Tommy felt sick thinking about it. But this world was vastly different than his own. It didn't look like everybody was suffering from death and destruction, so clearly there was a different set of rules that governed everything.

He just had to keep his head down. Get through school. And then he can leave the country and never look back.

Tommy sat down at the desk in the front, and pulled out the textbook required for the class. The other kids sat around him, a few next to him, pulling out their quills to take notes. Tommy did the same, but he felt more than confident in defense than in any other class. What other eleven year old could fight and survive in a war?

Professor Puffy stood at the front. She smiled at Tommy, and he returned it with a short nod. The first years from Gryffindor came filing in, even louder than the Ravenclaws. And Tommy wondered if he had ever been that annoying.

(Even now, he could close his eyes and hear Tubbo's voice shrieking next to him. Ranboo laughing, and Tommy trying to talk over the two as he explained that, *"no, for real, I had a dream that platypuses could fly. I think this means I will have good fortune as a cook. It says so right here in my divination book, see?"*)

They didn't believe him. But it was good enough.)

"Good morning!" Puffy called out, and the room quieted. A few boys snickered in the back row. "Welcome to defense! The first lesson in this class that I will be teaching you is a simple question. What do we need to defend ourselves against?"

Half a dozen Ravenclaw's hands shot in the air. Puffy called on one. A kid with sandy blonde hair and thick glasses, "muggles!"

Tommy's hands tightened around his quill. He almost snapped it in half. He kept his eyes on his desk, and concentrated on his breath.

"That's right," Puffy flicked her wand, and the word 'muggle' appeared on the board. "Why do we need to protect ourselves from them? Miss Lane?"

"I heard they used to burn us alive." A girl replied.

"People fear what they do not understand," Puffy said, "and muggles can never know the joy of casting magic. They will try and kill you if they see you are different from them. Remember, you may look like them. You can talk like them, you may even find them to be funny or attractive. They are dangerous. How many of us are killed each year by muggles?"

More hands raised, and Tommy only shrank further into his seat. Willing himself not to be called on. Puffy picked a Gryffindor boy. "My Da said there are over a thousand cases reported each year."

"That's close. Anybody else?" Puffy said, walking across the front of the room. Her heels clicking on the stone.

"I read in Witchy Weekly that there is an attack every *five seconds*." A girl said, in horror.

"Not that often," Puffy smiled, "there are reported over eight hundred cases in which a magical born is attacked a year. That's about sixty seven attacks a month, or, roughly, two and a half per *day*. This number used to be a lot higher than it is now. Does anybody else know why?"

"We put in laws."

"That's right! Two points for Ravenclaw." Puffy flicked her wand again, and the chalk wrote on the black board. "We enacted a law to separate our world from the muggle one. But sometimes that doesn't work. We can put all the laws in place, but some people still break them. And they get hurt in the process. Others are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. And muggles surround them without meaning to. In this class we will be teaching you how to get out of those situations and to contact the Aurors for assistance. Now, what else do we defend ourselves from?"

And then they went down a list. Creatures, both magical and non magical. Tommy was vividly reminded of his uncle's sister that visited with a massive dog in tow. The thing would gun after Tommy, biting and snarling. He still had a scar on his left leg from when Ripper had been too fast for Tommy to evade. He had been seven, and his aunt still bitched about how she had to take him to the hospital to get stitches.

There were also magical plants. Boggerts. One kid said Dryads. Centaurs, giants, werewolves, vampires, the list went on. Until Puffy wrote one option that made the room pause. *Wizards/Witches*.

"How do we defend ourselves from... ourselves?" Puffy waved to herself. "I know, it is rare. But occasionally, a wizard or witch will attack another."

“But that’s illegal.” A boy pipped up, aghast. “You could get your wand broken for that.”

“It is indeed. But what stops us from attacking another magic-blessed human?” Puffy held up her wand and wiggled it in the air. “I’m not talking about dueling, either. It is rare, but it happens. What can you do when somebody is throwing a dark curse at you?”

This world lacked wars. It was hard to comprehend. The fact that the children didn’t blink at the idea of muggles attacking them, but were shocked into silence that another one of their own kind would do so-

They were all so oblivious. It made Tommy feel ancient and bitter. They never lived in a world that was built from blood. The countless deaths. The hundreds of funerals he attended. He shook the hand of every single parent who lost their child at the Battle of Hogwarts. In some unfortunate cases, there wasn’t a single family member left to console.

For the first time, Tommy rose his hand in the air. And Puffy called on him. Quietly, Tommy replied, “could cast Expelliarmus.”

Puffy paused, and then smiled. “That is an excellent spell, Mister Innit. Does anybody know what expelliarmus means?”

The room was dead silent.

Tommy raised his hand again. “Yes, Mister Innit.”

“It disarms your opponent.” Tommy replied, as simply as he could. What else could he say? *“I’ve killed more men with that spell than with the killing curse? I’ve defeated a Dark Lord with this? I’ve used it since my second year to simply survive witches and wizards who have wanted me dead?”* That would never fly here.

“That is also correct. Five points to Ravenclaw.” Puffy beamed. “That is one of the best spells to use in this situation. Like Mister Innit said, it disarms your opponent. Their wand goes flying harmlessly away. I will be having a lesson later on this year on how to cast this spell.”

Tommy pointedly didn’t say if you put enough power behind it, it could launch your enemy like a football. Or he had nearly torn a mans arm off with a glancing blow of his spell. He always put in too much power. Making it less harmless, and far more deadly. He had a nasty habit of making a lot of his spells a bit too potent.

Tommy returned to his notes. He didn’t write anything down about muggles. It felt like a betrayal. Instead, he simply nodded along and went with the flow. He glanced up once, and caught the pink haired teacher assistant looking at him.

They glanced at each other before looking away. Tommy could feel his face flushing, his ears burning hot. How long had the older student been watching him for? Tommy hadn’t even noticed.

He kept his head down the rest of the class. Not looking up to take notes. Just scribbling whatever he heard down. And the next time they sat in silence at the library, Tommy used all

of the power he had to ignore the older student.

Not a single word was exchanged. Tommy was grateful for it.

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“Mister Innit I would like to have a word with you,” Puffy waved him to the front of the classroom after she dismissed the others. Tommy hesitated, halfway done packing his bag. His eyes lingered on Puffy’s wand, and then flicked over to the doorways.

Children were pouring out of the doors, there wasn’t an easy escape through there. But the windows were unobstructed...

“Mister Innit?” Puffy called again, and Tommy brushed his escape plans away. It was just a professor. She just wanted to talk to him. It was probably something to do with his last essay he turned in. He must’ve forgotten something. It wasn’t a life or death situation. His magic stirred uneasily in his stomach.

Tommy shoved the rest of his books into his bag hurriedly and went to the front of the class room. His head bent low and a shy smile on his face. “Hullo Professor.”

“Theseus, it’s so good to see you.” Professor Puffy smiled, “you should straighten up. Hold your head up high, like the brilliant student you are.”

Tommy instinctively straightened up, and his back ached. He was getting used to being small again. But it was worlds away from the height he eventually gained when he was a teenager.

“Is there... something wrong with my work?” Tommy shuffled his feet nervously. He was trying to gain the highest marks so he could apply moving up a class or two.

“No, nothing is wrong. I called you up here because I am the head of Ravenclaw. I’ve noticed you haven’t signed up for your yearly physical. Sign ups have been available in the home room for the past two weeks, and your name is the only one that isn’t on it.” She tilted her head, the smile still plastered on her face. But her eyes were sharp.

“Oh.” Tommy hid the flash of fear that rose up. Instead he let out a shaky abashed smile, “sorry. I’ve been so busy I’ve hardly been in the dorm room. I’ll make sure I’ll put my name on it tonight when I go to bed.”

“No need,” Puffy handed him a slip of paper, “I already signed you up for a time slot. I double checked with your schedule, and you don’t have a class. Tomorrow at two, please show up. It shouldn’t take more than a few minutes.”

Tommy hesitated and then took the parchment. Written in fine letters was his appointment at the infirmary.

“If anything is wrong,” Puffy said, holding the parchment tightly before letting go, allowing Tommy to take it, “don’t worry. I promise, Mister Innit. We just want you to feel safe. No

matter where you are, whether it is home or at Hogwarts.”

Tommy looked up at her sharply, “oh. *Oh?* Oh no. No, I’m not being... hurt.” Tommy stumbled over his shock and let out a laugh. “I just forgot. I’m sorry Professor. I didn’t mean to make you worry.” He rubbed the back of his neck, feeling the long hair between his fingers. “It completely slipped my mind. I promise this won’t ever happen again. I’ll make sure to check up on the announcement board more often.”

That had been the truth. Tommy really did forget about it. He recalled the prefects telling them to sign up, but he had been so busy with his classes that it had slipped his mind.

The sharp look in Puffy’s eyes softened. And she gave him a nod, “be sure to keep an eye on it, Mister Innit. I hope I never have to chase you down again.”

“I will, Professor.” Tommy took a few steps back, “until next time.”

“Good day. Oh, and Mister Innit?” Puffy called after Tommy turned his back to her.

“Yes?”

“Excellent work with your essay. It was a delight to read.”

“Thank you.” Tommy nodded, and scurried out of the classroom. His boots hitting the stone sharply as he duck and took a few random corridors. He didn’t have a destination. He needed to get far away. He ducked around a corner and into a small alcove. Leaning against the wall as he let out a pained breath.

Damn his little legs. It took far more effort to run. He missed being able to move freely. He had to eat more.

Which brought him to his next dilemma. Tommy held up the parchment again, scanning the words. Fuck. It required the healer to sign it. *And* he had to return it to Puffy.

If they did a scan of him, the game was up. Tommy knew his body was wrong. In all the worst ways. He recalled the dozens of times he spent in the infirmary, the healer waving her wand and a meters and meters of ailments were written on a waiting scroll. There were dozens of bones that had snapped when he was a kid. The breaks fixed magically later on, but they still remained.

The dozens of scars. The remains of curses cast on him. The venom of the giant man-eating snake was still in his blood, combated by the phoenix tears. He should be *dead*. Tommy knew that. But that was one thing he didn’t want the school to know. They would look into it.

“Kristin,” Tommy breathed, letting out a pant of exhaustion from his five minute run, “you fucking suck.”

She must be laughing at him somewhere.

Tommy needed a plan. He had a good idea of what to do. But it would be a long shot. He hadn’t expected to make a scene. But it was all he could muster in the short time he had.

Tubbo's older brothers would be cackling in glee if they knew what he was up to.

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Ironically, there were a few things that didn't exist in this universe. Things that Tommy had grown up with. He had picked up on the basic mechanic on how to make them, but never created a dung bomb before. It looked like the magical pranking business here was severely lacking.

Tommy couldn't stop his heart from thundering in his mouth as he dropped the makeshift dung bomb next to the Gryffindor table as he passed by. Kicking it with his shoe, and it rolled beneath the table.

Nobody shouted, "that kid dropped something!" He was half scared somebody had seen. But there wasn't a lull in the conversations. Lunch was barely beginning. Tommy had to see the healer in a half an hour.

Tommy sat in the middle of the Ravenclaw table. Picking up his plate and filling it with fruits and bread, before he began to eat. His stomach churned from nervousness. He had done so much worse before. But this was nerve wracking.

Still, he had to act like nothing was wrong.

He pulled a book out of his bag, and cracking open the thick tome. It was about stars and their constellations. Tommy's worst subject, by far, and he barely read a few words before getting distracted again.

Holding onto his magic tightly, Tommy unspooled it. Letting out a thread of it. It was so small. Weaker than what Tommy had grown used to. He had to wait for his core to fully settle before he could access more. But it still had been large, even at his age.

He let the thread fall onto the ground. His eyes frozen on the page as he focused on it. Pushing it along. Guiding it across the room, around the ankles of the other students, past their forgotten bags on the ground, before it slipped underneath the Gryffindor table.

It was just his luck that the dung bomb fell under the feet of a pack of older students. The one with black badges in the shapes of birds that Tommy had seen floating around.

Tommy's magic brushed up against one boy's foot. "What was that?" Tommy heard clearly above the voices, and cursed his luck. He was sensitive.

He jabbed the thread of his magic into the dung bomb, and pulled the thread back as hard as he could.

The table was lifted off its feet as a literal green ball of ashy smoke exploded outwards. The boy who had stood up was flung backwards. His friends who had sat next to him suffered the same fate. Sliding against the stone ground until they came to a halt. Coughing and wheezing from the utterly horrible *stench* that filled the air.

Girls screamed from the sudden noise. The Great Hall was thrown into chaos. Tommy snapped his book closed, winding his magic up into a little ball again and snapping the door shut. Clamping down on it, hoping that nobody could trace it back to him.

He had used such little magic to activate it. But Tommy didn't know how sensitive the older boy was. He held his robe sleeve over his mouth, and several other students copied him. A boy nearby retched from the smell.

A sense of nostalgia hit Tommy. This wasn't out of place in his world. Tubbo's brothers were hellions, determined to bring trouble to everybody at least once a week. Tommy hadn't realized how much he missed it.

"I'm going to be sick," somebody muttered and then retched. Their lunch coming up.

Yep. This was pretty normal.

A professor stood up, and shot a flurry of sparks in the air. "Everybody, remain calm." But even their voice was drowned out. Tommy shoved his book into his bag, and joined the sea of students that tried to get away from the horrid smell. "Please leave in an orderly fashion!"

It didn't work. The scent of muck and day old socks lingered. Intertwining with people's clothes and hair. Sticking to them. The added smell of vomit didn't really help either. People crowded at the door to get out as fast as they could.

The air outside was fresh. But it quickly gained a new smell. All around Tommy he heard others bemoaning and bitching about it. The constant sound of somebody gagging near by was continuous.

He waited twenty minutes before leaving. By then, the hysteria was starting to fade. The teachers were trying their best to regain order. And Tommy slipped away easily, nobody taking note of him. He climbed the staircases up to the infirmary, the parchment Professor Puffy gave to him in his hand. The door to was already open, and there was a literal stream of people walking in and out. Students with pale features, clutching their nose or mouth.

Tommy awkwardly stood in the doorway. Already, every single bed was filled. The windows were open wide, but the smell of the dung bomb was powerful. The healer bouncing between each student.

Tommy caught sight of the group of Gryffindors laying in the beds, curled up and a sick bowl next to them. He sent an mental apology to them. He hadn't meant to attack his own house, or, well, his *old* house. It was still his favorite house, despite being in Ravenclaw this time around.

The healer noticed him. A lovely older woman with roses in her hair. She looked flustered, and waved Tommy away. Tommy saw a badge with the name *Hannah* on it. "We cannot help you get the smell out of your hair. Please use a shower and soaps instead-"

"Oh, I uh. I'm here for an appointment?" Tommy held up the parchment awkwardly.

“Bother,” Healer Hannah muttered, “okay, please wait for just a moment.” She glanced around her, “in my office, please. I’ll be right with you-” somebody behind her wretched.

“I can come back another time.” Tommy held up his hands, “I’m already late but what’s another day, right? Could you sign it and-”

“Bless your little heart.” Hannah sighed, “yes, I’ll sign this and you take it to your head your house. We can take care of the rest tomorrow.” She summoned a quill and scrawled her name on the paper.

“Madam Rose, I don’t feel good,” somebody groaned, and she turned away, dismissing Tommy.

He didn’t stay a second longer. Tommy felt like a fox that just made it out of the chickens coop. Like a child with a forbidden biscuit out of the jar. He was just waiting for the eventual, “now wait just a minute, get back here kid-”

But it never came. He walked to his dorm room, the smell of the dung bomb floating in the air. A literal line of students waiting for the showers. He ignored them all and flopped onto his bed. Before letting a giant smile hit his face.

Fuck *yes!*

“Kristin you beloved woman, I will kiss you. You absolute queen. Thank you. Thank you!” Tommy held his hands up in victory. He didn’t think it would work at all in the slightest. It had been *sheer luck*. Maybe Kristin did have a hand in it, maybe not. But she was the only one he could actually talk to. Which was kind of sad, if he thought about it.

A plan that shouldn’t have worked at all in the slightest and yet he had *done it*. It worked out.

He shouldn’t be celebrating just yet. It could crumble tomorrow, if Healer Hannah recalled their interaction. But he was hoping she’d forget. She’d be so busy helping those affected that it would completely slip her mind.

But he had done it. He got her signature. He didn’t need a physical. And he could continue to fly under the radar. His plan was working.

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Wilbur held a bouquet of flowers in one hand and knocked on the door to the infirmary. The foul odor still hung in the air, despite it being magicked away dozens of times. He held a bashful smile on his lips, even as he heard the hurried footsteps.

“I’m sorry, visiting hours are over. If you have any issues please- oh *Wilbur*.” Hannah paused as she noticed who had come to visit. Her pretty pink cheeks flushed slightly. And her hands came up to run through her messy brown hair. Pressing down on the fly away strands that bounced back up.

An unremarkable woman. Not even that pretty. But easily swayed. So she was useful.

“Good evening, Healer Rose.” Wilbur stepped into the room with elegance. “I hope it won’t be a bother, but I was wondering if I could visit some of my friends? Just for a few minutes.” He tilted his head down, letting his hair fall into his eyes bashfully.

“It won’t be a bother, not at all.” Hannah wiped her hands on her apron, “it’s so sweet of you to visit them. They haven’t received anybody what with the,” she waved a hand in the air, gesturing at nothing, “thing.”

“It’s understandable.” Wilbur shook his head regretfully, “what an awful thing to happen to anybody. I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy.” And then he held out the bouquet of flowers to Hannah, “I heard you’ve been dealing with the brunt of the damage. I hope these smell nicer.”

Hannah gently took the bundle of flowers, her face going positively pink. “O-oh thank you so much, Wilbur. I couldn’t possibly-”

“You deserve it.” Wilbur smiled, pressing the flowers into her hands. “After all you did today, you kept the school standing.”

“Thank you.” Hannah stared down at the blooms. “I’m going to go put these in some water. Your friends are in the back.” And she turned tail and fled, her ears red.

Wilbur watched her a minute longer, the smile on his face slowly dropping. Once he was sure she was distracted, he moved. He shoved a hand into his pocket and lazily strolled past the other beds, the occupants out cold or behind the sound proof curtains. The smell got worse the further he went in. Until he found the Crows.

He brought his boot up and kicked at the bed. Waking the startled boy with a snort. “Report,” Wilbur barked, and the boy- what was his name again? Wilbur didn’t bother with it. Just a nameless drone, one of hundreds they used- scrambled up to his feet. The Crow bowed shakily, swaying.

How... pathetic.

Phil had done worse to the kid. The training he made the Crows undertake was no joke. And here he was, acting like a first year after astrology class. Somebody needed to go back to training if this was his reaction. This particular Crow will be going back to his training.

“M- my apologies,” the boy bowed low.

“I expected your report an hour ago.” Wilbur’s tone was icy. “And you were taking a nap instead?”

“I-”

“I don’t like excuses.” Wilbur sighed, “just tell me what happened, and you can go back to your lazy lie in.”

“I didn’t-” the Crow blinked, and then gritted his teeth, “we sat down at our table for lunch. Jerry had just grabbed a plate of food. Kevin was talking about Herbology when I felt

something brush against my ankle. I had just asked if anybody else could feel it but then the *thing* went off. Next thing I know, I'm halfway across the Great Hall."

"What did you feel?"

"Lord Philza has been training me in sensing magic. I am still learning, but I am certain it was somebody's magic. It brushed up against me and then- boom."

Wilbur tilted his head to the side. "It was moving?"

"Yes."

"With a purpose?"

"Yes, sir." That meant they had significant control over their magic. An older student.

Wilbur tilted his head to the side, "did you notice what core they had?"

The boy swallowed, "it... felt like fire. I thought I was getting burned, at first. It was white fire. Like sunlight."

Wilbur was silent. Thinking. They did have a handful of Crows that had light magic. But they were all older. They graduated Hogwarts a few years ago, and far too loyal to do something like this. Light cores were rare. Finding those who'd willingly allow themselves to join his father's cause was even more uncommon.

Most of the time, they had to put down those who'd oppose their cause. They were too upright. Too moral. They kicked up a big fuss about the ancient laws, inciting protests and rebellions.

It was a kindness to put them down before they became nuisances.

The Crow took Wilbur's silence for displeasure. And he was wilting, bowing lower as the seconds ticked on.

"I see." Wilbur said, "show me where it touched you."

The boy raised a pant leg. His bare ankle white, save for a small thin red mark. No bigger than a string. Wilbur hummed, and swiped a finger over it.

The trace of magic was faint. Fading away even now, as Wilbur examined it. But to his surprise, he felt his own magic surge up at the touch of it. Pitch black tendrils reaching up and raking across the boy's skin.

The Crow muffled a croak of pain. Holding his hand over his mouth, tears already starting to form in his eyes. It would only get worse. After a few choking breaths, Wilbur flicked his wand and silenced the boy. Wimp.

Wilbur was fascinated. Watching with idle curiosity as his magic reacted. Ignoring the gasps and pained expressions from the Crow.

This had never happened before.

Whatever touched him was far too faded to find now. Wilbur's magic dug in, without his permission, and clawed at the remains. Trying to grasp it. But it was too old. But whatever it was, it made Wilbur's magic wild.

After a few seconds, blood starting to bubble up from the wounds, Wilbur gripped it tight and pulled it back. It clung as hard as it could- before retreating back. And after a moment, Wilbur released it.

Why pull it back when it clearly wanted something? It was a part of Wilbur's soul. Who was he to deny himself?

It dug itself into muscle and bone, wrapping itself around and around, clinging to the fading trace that whispered light and sunshine. Wilbur watched curiously as it tore the Crow's leg off. Blood splattered across Wilbur's front. The boy had passed out minutes ago. Crushing bones into a fine powder and leaving only bloody wet mulch behind. Wilbur waited until his magic calmed down.

"Are you done now?" Wilbur asked it, and it bristled. It made his eyebrows rise, his magic had never been so... irritated before. It flicked and burned, but coiled back into his core like a reluctant dog. Wilbur let out a sigh, and waved his wand over his front. The blood vanishing, leaving his robes pristine.

It had been... so possessive. Wilbur wondered what it would do if it found the perpetrator of the explosive stink bomb. Rip them apart? It wouldn't be the first time he saw two opposing magics collide. It usually ended with one wizard dead, and the other barely standing.

"Dad will be interested in this," Wilbur muttered idly to himself, as he stepped away. The curtain was drawn back behind him, and he stuck his hands into his pockets casually. Hannah was at her desk, and she flushed when she saw him.

Phil would be upset if Wilbur let a Crow bleed out. It would be simple to regrow a limb. The boy would be fine. Eventually.

"Did you have a good chat with your friend?" She curled a lock of hair behind her ear.

"Yes," Wilbur hummed, and then pulled out his wand. Hannah stared up at him with trusting green eyes. She barely took notice he drew his wand. Instead staring up at him with a sense of adoration. Keeping eye contact, he flicked his wand once, and whispered, "*oblivate.*"

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Despite what others thought, and what his grades said before coming to this world, Tommy wasn't stupid. He had Ranboo to do all the thinking for him. But after being friends with

Ranboo, some things rubbed off on him. And taking any precaution to avoid detection was ingrained in Tommy.

A magically sensitive boy felt Tommy, and that was a witness. Some people weren't very good at it, barely able to sense it. But others were like Tommy, and that posed a problem. Tommy could be picked out of the crowd.

He needed to hide his core. And he had to do it yesterday. He had been too giddy that his plan had worked, it slipped his mind. But his anxiety decided to remind him late into the night, and Tommy spent the rest of the time staring at his bedframe.

There was a potion Tommy could use. But that took a lot longer than what Tommy had available. Ranboo brewed it a couple times but they had to save their supplies for polyjuice potions instead. Tommy could possibly recreate it from memory, but again, he didn't have the *time*.

The professors and students were pissed off after yesterday. The second they got a lead on Tommy, they would hunt him down. Tommy had only glimpsed at how protective everybody was of their world. Anybody who even *threatened* another wizard would get suspended. Or worse, expelled.

(Merlin, Tommy missed his friends.)

There was... another trick. But it was awful. A literal last resort. Tommy had choked it down before. Ranboo said it was some type of parasite, but it was already dead so it couldn't actually feed on him, but thinking about it made Tommy shiver in disgust.

Eel weed grew around the Black Lake. It was what gave it its name. It absorbed black magic, filtering the water so the mer folk in the bottom of the lake could thrive. It was like ink, it could stain Tommy's magic so it wouldn't match any records that they might have picked up. It wasn't fool proof, it injected a bit of dark magic into his aura. It would fade after a time. Harmless, really. But it sucked.

The first time Tommy ate it was in the wild, living off of whatever he could scrounge up. He threw up black bile, his tears turning dark and inky. He nearly scared Tubbo shitless.

Tommy hoped he still had the resistance he built up for it. He thought he had been *done* eating this shit. But somehow he was still eating the grossest thing he ever laid his eyes on. Not even the gillweed had been this nasty.

He got up early, heading out of his dorm room. The smell of the dung bomb still lingered slightly in the air. Maybe he added too much stink powder. But it had done its job. It'll go away... eventually.

There was only one other person up in the home room. Sitting next to the fireplace with a book in his hands sat the pink haired assistant. They both glanced at each other, and Tommy gave him a polite nod before moving to the entrance.

The sun was barely coloring the sky with a dusty pink when Tommy exited the castle. His breath coming out in white puffs as he headed towards the lake. His boots sinking into the dewy thick grass.

Damn his short legs.

Tommy made it, slightly winded from the trek, and looked at the icy cold water. He wasn't going in there to grab the plant. He pulled his wand out and summoned it. Tommy's magic, pent up after so long, surged into the spell. The weed shot out of the water in a large wad, and Tommy dropped to the mud as it soared over his head. It landed on the grass with a wet splat.

Sand and mud and whatever gross things covered the black seaweed-like plant. Tommy grimaced. "Hello, my old foe. Never thought I'd see you again." He said, stepping closer. He picked up a strand, and ran his wand over it to banish the dirt from it.

He stared up at the sunrise, crammed the weed into a ball, and shoved it into his mouth.

Tommy choked.

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Turns out, he didn't have his resistance anymore.

The eel weed was slowly circulating through his system. Tommy threw up when it finally hit his core, the dye hitting it and his magic squirmed uncomfortably as it couldn't get away. Tommy laid in the grass, sweating almost feverishly.

He missed breakfast by the time he staggered to his feet. He wasn't going to eat anything, but it he barely stumbled into his first class of the day. And then he remembered he forgot his essay in his room, and the day snowballed from there.

To say the least, Tommy was in a very bad mood.

It wasn't like he could go to the infirmary, they would scan him. He didn't have a good excuse to leave class and die in his bed. He had to act like nothing was happening, even though the urge to put his head on his desk and pass out was tempting.

He took another detour between classes to sit in a bathroom stall and vomit again. He looked almost feverish. Tommy cast a cleaning spell on himself, and nearly scoured his own skin raw by accident. His magic roiling in misery.

After that, Tommy used the old fashion way of splashing water into his face in the sink. "Kristin," Tommy leaned up against the porcelain sink, "basilisk venom felt somehow better than this." He stared into his reflection, water dripping off his pale face. "Can you let me know if I die today, all of my efforts weren't in vain? Thanks." His stomach suddenly cramped up, and Tommy curled up in a half ball, "damn it, even a blood quill wasn't this bad. I could at least ignore it until it hit bone."

Kristin didn't answer. Tommy was used to it.

He did this to himself. Tommy should've just bit the bullet, but he was far too stubborn. He was already in this far. Might as well deal with it.

Classes finished an eternity later. Tommy moved sluggishly to his bed. But as soon as he opened his door, he saw his roommates sitting at their desks and playing a rambunctious game of wizards chess.

He closed the door and left.

His head was pounding, and there was only one other place he could find *peace*. The library.

Tommy shuffled his way down. Pausing a few times just to breathe. And then he found the hidden nook and collapsed into the chair. He curled up into a ball, and his eyes slid shut.

When he opened them again, he wasn't alone. Tommy jumped out of his skin, his hand finding his wand in his pocket. But reality came back. He wasn't in danger, he was in Hogwarts. A different world.

His eyes met the pink haired assistants. He was sitting in his chair, a book propped up on his lap, and Tommy flushed. He had been caught asleep. Tommy hadn't meant to pass out. It just sort of happened.

Thankfully, he did feel a bit better after the nap. Tommy's stomach wasn't cramping anymore. But he could feel the headache lingering. But he could push it aside. He blinked the grogginess from his eyes, and shuffled for his bag. Pulling out a textbook and flipping it open.

He barely caught anything during class today. It was things he already knew, but Tommy had a schedule to keep. He needed to pass at least a third year level test by the end of spring, so he could jump up to a fourth year position. He could then study for his OWLs and NEWTs and try and take them over the summer of the next year, and he could be gone in two, maybe three, years flat.

An ambitious goal. But it was the fastest one Tommy could convenience of.

The only noise was the sound of pages being flipped. Tommy's stomach churned, empty, but at least it wasn't horrible. His magic was finally settling down. He might go to the kitchens and get something light to eat before bed.

Tommy barely noticed the sound of muffled footsteps on the carpet. But a noise brought him out of his intense focus. He glanced up when somebody walked in, and then went back to his book before his brain caught up.

He stiffened as Wilbur Minecraft prowled into the room. "Hey Techno," Wilbur tilted his head back lazily, a smile on the corner of his mouth, "you got a minute?"

Tommy kept his gaze firmly on the paper. The words losing their meaning as he was acutely aware of the *one fucking person* he tried to avoid was here.

"No," said the pink-haired assistant, his name apparently Techno.

“Oh?” Wilbur’s eyes landed on Tommy, and from the corner of his eye Tommy saw him straighten up. “Aww, have you taken a little firstie under your wing?” His tone was lighter, teasing.

Tommy pulled the book up higher to hide his face. Slumping into the seat further.

“No.” Techno responded blandly.

“I don’t know, you two look pretty chummy to me. Are you sure you aren’t-” Wilbur leaned in further, and Tommy felt it.

A brush of magic against the back of his neck. Curious. It poked him, and he could sense that it was... baffled. Somehow. It curled around his wrist, and Tommy’s eyes dropped from the book and landed on his bare arm. The hair rising up as it brushed over his skin.

It poked at him, from multiple angles. As if it was searching for something. But it was getting irritated and baffled when it couldn’t find it.

Tommy snapped the book closed when the magic brushed up against his ear, ruffling his hair. He tucked it under one arm, and pulled his bag up.

“Oh hey, don’t leave. I’m sure Techno has-” Wilbur raised up his hands, in a pleading gesture. But Tommy could see through the plastic mask. Tommy’s headache spiked, and he lost whatever little patience he had.

“Oh piss off.” Tommy snapped back, and pushed past Wilbur. “Stop bothering people and get a life, loser.”

There was a brief pause, and Wilbur let out a harsh bark of laughter. Tommy turned the corner, and he barely heard, “oh don’t get so upset, Techno. Some kids have yet to learn-” before it faded away.

Tommy felt sick. It wasn’t from the eel weed this time. He didn’t take any more detours, instead, heading directly to his bed. Firing off half a dozen silencing spells on his drapes before curling up into a little ball. He had just-

Ugh.

He is such a fucking idiot. He just told his *father* to piss off. The guy who *died* protecting Tommy. Merlin, he can’t believe he *said that*.

Wilbur wasn’t his father. He wasn’t. Not here. But he was the same person who stood in front of Dreamon and begged him to spare Tommy’s life.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy whispered, dragging a hand down his face. Maybe, this way, Wilbur would leave him be. He will just see Tommy as some rude child. Besides, he was in his seventh year, he had other things to deal with. It could work out in the end. They both avoid each other and life will go on as intended.

Tommy hated this. “Fuck you Kristin.” He whispered one more time before rolling over, “this place sucks.”

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Life was normal again after that. Tommy aced his classes, turn in his homework ahead of time, was reasonably polite when called upon- everything Ranboo had dreamed of. Of course, if Tommy had Ranboo in this world with him, they would be starting a rebellion against their treatment of muggleborns. And they would somehow convince Kristin to bring Tubbo here as well. They couldn't thrive with only two of the golden trio.

Tommy couldn't be by himself-

Shit.

Tommy ran a hand through his hair. Everything he did was to get away from here. Every waking moment, he was studying or doing homework or learning some new bullshit spell that he *already knew* . The classes were stupid. He was wasting his time here.

He is an *adult*. Not some eleven year old. He should just... run away. Find somewhere else to live. But what would he do? The magical world didn't employ children.

He could start a criminal empire. That could be fun. But Tommy couldn't put his heart into it.

Was it strange he suddenly missed life or death situations? At least with those, he had a straight forward path- get the hell out of dodge. Survive. Take his enemies down.

Living in a society where that never happens was driving him slowly insane. Tommy had started running in the mornings to get some exercise, the burning in his lungs and legs a slight distraction from his reality.

Tommy didn't know how to cope here.

He was a child of war. And there was just... peace here. He was on edge for the attack that never came. And it made his nerves feel like they were on fire. The only saving grace he had was the goal to get out of here. Otherwise he'd feel lost and aimless.

Tommy had done harder things than do school work. This felt almost too easy, even as he threw himself head first into work, barely giving himself any breaks from it all. If he kept reading about Gamp's law, then he didn't have to worry about his past. See? It was simple.

Tommy had been dreading the other shoe to drop for some time now. Life wasn't perfect. It was expected.

When he felt a spell flung at his back, he was more than ready. Tommy barely registered it as a stinging hex as he side stepped it. Letting it fly past next to him. His wand already in his hand, and he flicked it out and threw his own spell back.

Tommy caught the wand that sailed through the air. The motion ingrained in his soul after doing it so often.

The hallway was empty, as it normally was. The day was over, and Tommy had been heading back to his dorm. Three fourth year boys stood a short distance away, black badges gleaming on their robes.

Tommy had seen those occasionally. Only a couple students had them. Some kind of group? These boys attacked him, unprovoked. Tommy hadn't done anything to upset them. Hell, he had never seen them before.

Was there some hidden prejudice that Tommy didn't know about?

The leader, now wandless, had a pinched expression. "Get him," he nodded at the other boys.

Two streaks of color flew down the hall at Tommy, and he stepped past them. He could make a shield, but with his core already so small, it wouldn't last against the older students. They could outlast him.

Tommy darted towards them. Stepping out of the way as the boys flung spell after spell at him. They went from mild hexes to painful jinxes in a matter of seconds. "Stay still!" One boy growled.

Tommy flicked his own wand out, and a second stick went high into the air and landed in his palm with the other. "Flipendo," Tommy hissed, and the leader was flipped onto his back. He had been in the way of the last boy.

The remaining boy with his wand gripped it tightly, and before he could shoot off another spell, Tommy rammed his foot between his legs.

The older boy gasped, and fell over, and Tommy took the chance to summon his wand into his waiting palm. Tommy turned to the final boy on his feet and snapped, "accio shoelaces."

The boy's feet flipped up, and he too, was on his back. All three were down, leaving Tommy the only one standing. It had been over within twenty seconds.

Tommy paused. Taking in a deep breath, before slowly letting it out. It had been easy. *Too* easy. Where were the deadly curses? The hexes that made blood boil and teeth shatter. It felt wrong for it to be so... simple.

These were children. Tommy was the adult here. It had been like fighting toddlers. There was this ingrained urge to silence them. To make sure that they could never get up and hunt him down again. The Ministry would know they were here if Tommy let them go. The Snatchers would be everywhere soon, the Death Eaters would be around every corner-

There was a slight moan of pain as one boy clambered up to his feet, and it broke Tommy out of his memories.

"Don't be bullies." Tommy said, even as the words fell flat in his mouth. He stepped to a window, and tossed the wands out onto the grass outside. "I won't be so nice if you try this again."

Tommy fought the urge to run away. Instead, he took controlled steps, hyper aware of any attack that could be flung at his back. But there weren't any hidden tricks. The boys stayed down.

He rounded the corner and nearly walked into somebody. Tommy stumbled to the side, his nerves already on edge. The grip on his wand tightened, and he hissed, "fuck off." His shoulder hit their arm as he stormed off.

His adrenaline was running too high. He needed to calm himself down. His hands shook and his magic wrapped itself around him like a cloak.

Tommy barely took notice of who, exactly, he ran into. Or the pair of eyes that trailed after him.

.

A note fell onto Tommy's desk in Defence. He barely glanced at it before looking up. The teachers aid, what was his name again? Started with a T- uh... Techno? He was already moving on, passing out graded essays. Tommy stared at him, before picking the note up.

Mister Innit, you have been invited to a mandatory tutoring session. You are failing (2) of your classes. Please arrive in the Library in the wolf room today at four.

Failure for not bringing up your grades could mean losing privileges, such as after school clubs and activities.

What the fuck was *this*? Tommy eye's shot up and stared at the asshole, but Techno didn't notice or didn't care. The urge to let his magic burn the damn note was powerful. But Tommy held back.

He was going to fix this. Whatever class it was in, he'd do better. Obviously. If it just *told* him which classes they were, it would be simple to know what he had *missed* . Tommy thought he turned in everything, even the missing homework from that one day-

Surely that wouldn't cause him to *fail* now would it? Tommy was at the top of his class. At least, he thought he was. He was in the house of intelligence.

A horrible thought struck Tommy, was he- *no* . It was impossible. But surely-

He wasn't in the middle of the class was he? He had to be at the top. At *least* second place. There was no way that fucking Kevin was higher than he was.

The *audacity*.

Was this the reason why Ranboo didn't want to be in Ravenclaw, because Tommy could see it now. Why be smart when everybody was?

Tommy calmed himself down. It would be fine. It'll be *okay* . Tommy can figure this out. It'll be *so fucking simple* . He can always try harder in the future. At least he found out now instead of at the end of the semester.

Tommy paused, a horrible realization hitting him. Merlin, he really was becoming like Ranboo. What was next? Color coding the calendar for quizzes?

Actually that did sound like a good idea-

Wait! No!

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“Aren’t you supposed to be in tutoring?” The words cut into Tommy’s focus. The sentence Tommy had been reading fragmented, and he had to blink for a second before actually noticing what was going on. He was sitting in his chair in the library, a thick book open on his lap.

“Hm?” He hummed. Merlin, his eyes felt raw. Had he been blinking at all or just been staring at the incredibly dry text in front of him. “Oh, uh. Maybe? I don’t have a watch.” Tommy shrugged distracted.

“It’s half past four.” Techno stood in the entrance, looming over him. A irritated look on his face.

Tommy stared up at him, “has anybody ever told you, you’d make a great door?” And then his gaze dropped back to the book.

“What?”

“Great door,” Tommy waved a hand vaguely, “terrible window.”

“Is that an insult-?”

“Merlin, no. It means you’re fuckin’ in the way. Sit down, asshole.” Tommy flipped to the next page. “And no talking in the fucking library, bitch.”

“You are supposed to be down the hallway in a tutoring session,” Tommy caught Techno jabbing a finger down the aisle of books.

“*Actually* no I don’t.” Tommy sighed, giving up reading. He fumbled for a spare quill and shoved it into the pages as a spare bookmark. “I checked with my teachers. Full marks. Not a single essay missing.”

In reality, Tommy blubbered his way to every single teacher with actual fucking tears in his eyes. Terrified he was failing. Every adult soothed his worries by telling him he had full marks, sans one- the history bitch. She said he could “try harder” so here Tommy was, reading an actual fucking ancient tome.

Techno was silent. And Tommy slung his bag over his shoulder, “I’ll see myself out. Obviously, we need to part ways.” Tommy studied him for a second, and then snapped his fingers. “I know. It’s because you talk too much. You should really shut up every once in a while.” And Tommy shoved his shoulder into the boy’s side and pushed past him.

He felt a brush of magic jab out at him. Dark and *writhing* with anger. Tommy side stepped it, and continued down his merry way. He could probably get a couple hours of study time in his bedroom, if the other boys were busy elsewhere. If not, Tommy could try the Room of Requirement. That never failed him before.

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A note was slapped onto the table. Tommy stared at it. And then slowly looked up. Techno was standing in front of him, arms folded, face thunderous.

“What’s this?” Tommy poked at the note with a quill.

“Tutoring lessons.” Techno’s voice was so low, it sounded like a growl.

Tommy slid the paper back to him. “No thanks. I’m fine.”

“Look at it again.”

Tommy held his stare for a moment, before picking it up and flipping it open. This time, there were *three* classes he was failing. *And* a note from each professor stating he was missing five or six assignments in each class.

“Interesting.” Tommy said mildly, when he felt ready to explode. His magic wanted something on *fire*. “Which assignments am I missing?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Techno leaned in, casting a shadow over Tommy. “And if you don’t go, then I can make it *all of them vanish* .”

“Illegal, that is.” Tommy sniffed, folding the paper up and shoving it into his pocket.

“Abusing your evil powers, you fuckin’ creep. Do you have fun doing this to eleven year olds?”

Techno blinked, and Tommy pushed onwards, “you like watching us cry? What an absolute sicko, you are.”

“Just go to your tutoring lesson, kid.”

“Okay,” Tommy said, and then held up his hands, “I’ll go to it, after I show Professor Puffy the note you made. Because it’s so fucking funny- my teachers handed me a report with my grades on it *yesterday* . I’d like to see how you bluff out of this one.”

Techno’s teeth were white as he bared them, a homicidal look in his eyes. Tommy only smiled coldly, and patted him on his arm. “Try harder, mate. Ta’.” And Tommy left, feeling the dark writhing mass of magic burn like a bonfire against his back.

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Wilbur was watching the dots of quidditch players out on the field, tossing an apple in his hand idly when the door slammed open and Techno walked in. Wilbur didn’t get a chance to

say a word before Techno flicked his wand out and summoned a vase to his hand, and then violently threw it at a wall.

The porcelain shattered, flying into the air before hitting the walls. Breaking apart into thousands of pieces. Techno waved his wand, and the vase reformed. The pieces flying up and fitting back together.

Then he threw it again.

“Somebody looks happy,” Wilbur mused, a smile on the edge of his lips. “What’s got you so riled up?”

Techno let out a low growl, and the decorative bowl on a shelf shattered. Spraying the glass across the room. Wilbur pouted. He got that bowl from a lovely painter. She still owes him a favor for getting her into Belgium's exclusive art school.

“Can’t you break your own things?” Wilbur tossed the apple up, and it never came back down.

The apple was thrown against the wall as Techno growled, “shut up!”

Wilbur let out a leisurely stretch, before folding his arms behind his head. Kicking up one foot to rest on the table next to him. “What has gotten your knickers in a twist, Techno? I haven’t seen you this riled up since the duel last year.”

“I am going to kill him.” Techno hissed, his pink hair falling into his eyes. The pitcher of flowers, which Wilbur got from his many admirers, exploded. Water flying everywhere. “I’m going to hold him under the surface of the black lake and watch him *drown* .”

Wilbur plucked a wet leaf off his jacket with a disgusted frown. “How about you take calming deep breaths, Techno.”

Techno whirled around, a furious expression on his face. “*I am calm.*”

Wilbur stared him down, and Techno snarled again. Flinging his hand out and the pantries doors flew off, slamming into the wall. Wilbur stood up, “that is enough, Techno.” His own magic crackling out, challenging Techno’s. It gripped Techno’s magic in a vice, holding it, almost swallowing it entirely.

Almost instantly Techno deflated like his strings were cut. Wilbur was there, and he pulled his younger brother into his arms. Wilbur had to lean on his toes to set his chin onto Techno’s head, it was unfair that he had been getting so tall. Soon, Techno would tower over both of them. He might be in his fifth year, but he was already growing to be the tallest of his class.

Wilbur let out a pleased hum, and his restrictive hold over Techno’s magic lessened slightly. Just enough for him to run his own magic lightly over Techno’s, his younger brother shivered.

“Are you going to tell me what got you so upset, Tech?” Wilbur asked softly.

“I can deal with it.”

“By drowning them in the lake?” Wilbur’s voice was light and teasing. “That could be fun, but I think Dad might have an issue with you killing one of his students.”

“He deserves it.” Techno’s hands curled into Wilbur’s cloak. Holding him tightly, just as Wilbur was to him. “Little brat. He will not *listen*. ”

“How little are we talking here?” Wilbur snorted, amused. A child got Techno this riled up?

“First year.” Techno grumbled, and Wilbur tsked.

“Phil will absolutely have an issue with that. He doesn’t like killing off children that young. They are his favorite age.”

“Not this one.” Techno growled, and in short grunts, explained what happened. Wilbur listened, and then pulled away. Reaching up to pinch at Techno’s cheeks.

“Awww, you were defending my honor,” Wilbur let out a teasing coo, and Techno snorted and pulled out of Wilbur’s grip. “Don’t worry, Techno. I’ll take care of this for you. That’s what big brothers are for.”

Wilbur tilted Techno’s head down, their eyes staring into each others, “and then, when the kid is a Crow, I’ll let you have him. Wouldn’t that be nice?”

Techno *grinned*.

.

The quietest place in the school was the library. Tommy did not return to the corner, instead he found a new nook. It was a table with a wobbly chair in a corner, it looked like it was frequently used by other students, judging the graffiti on the wood. Tommy ignored it, instead he spread out his items on the table. Hand in hair, Tommy was writing down a quote for his essay, his fucking five foot long essay that was an absolute crime to get in his first year- they should give the eleven year olds more easy assignments in Tommy’s humble opinion.

The chair across from him slid out, and somebody dropped into it. Tommy didn’t look up, but he felt a flash of annoyance. There was tables available practically everywhere, and yet there was some random person who *always* had to sit next to Tommy.

At first it had been a few fellow first years, until Tommy caught on that they were trying to copy his notes and work, so he sent a few silent stinging hexes until they went away. Tommy finished copying the last paragraph he needed, and then glanced up.

Wilbur Minecraft, head resting in his palm, was staring him down. His green and silver tie glinting in the light.

Tommy blinked slowly. He glanced away, and then back again. Was this some sort of hallucinations? Tommy knew that Ranboo got them after being in the homework zone for too long.

“Hi.” Wilbur smiled at him, and Tommy decided that this was either a horrible realistic dream or this was real. “Theseus Innit, right?”

Tommy closed the book with a snap, and tapped on the cover with his wand. The book was sent back to its shelf, and Tommy grabbed his essay and tucked it under his arm, not bothering to roll it up.

“Where are you going?” Wilbur’s smile vanished as Tommy picked up his bag.

“The infirmary,” Tommy replied blandly.

“Why?”

Tommy paused and shrugged, “I feel sick? Yeah. Sure. That’s it. Bye.” And he left, stuffing his scroll into his bag. The paper wrinkled, and Tommy mentally sighed. He was going to have to rewrite it, wasn’t he?

“But-” Wilbur stood up, the chair sliding out against the floor with a squeal.

“Bye!” Tommy repeated, and then disappeared behind the stacks of books.

.

“Mister Innit-” Wilbur was outside of Tommy’s class.

“Sorry, I’m busy.” Tommy brushed past him. For the first time, happy of his small stature. He squished himself between the wall and Wilbur, and emerged into the hallway.

“Wait up,” Wilbur was on his heels. Tommy clutched his bag tighter to his chest, and added a bit of extra speed to his hurried pace. He heard a light chuckle, “what are you doing that makes you so busy?”

“I have things to do.” Tommy kept his head low. Why was Wilbur of all people following him around? Why? What did Tommy do this time to warrant his dead father’s alternative self to right on his heels?

“Really? Maybe I can help you.” Wilbur’s long legs stretched out besides Tommys, and once more, Tommy cursed his short stature. “I’m a very good tutor.”

Tommy paused in his next step. Things... suddenly made sense. Tommy turned and faced Wilbur, “this is about telling what’s-his-face no, isn’t it.”

The plastic mask didn’t waver. But Tommy could see the signs. The tight corners of the eyes, the way the smile stayed perfectly in place without a waver, the slight hitch of breath. Tommy had spent nine fucking months prying secrets from Clay Taken. He had watched memories of a charming Slytherin boy who became the most feared Dark Lord in history. Clay had been born with a muggle last name, and still rose in the ranks of pureblooded bigots.

In comparison, Wilbur was a cheap imitation.

“I think I will be fine, without any tutors. I don’t need you. I don’t need the pink haired fucker. I don’t know why you are following me around, but I am *fine*. Leave me be.” Tommy adjusted the bag in his arms. The strap had fallen to pieces two classes prior, and Tommy was resorting to just carrying it now.

“Do you know who I am?” Wilbur cocked an eyebrow, his light friendly voice fading a bit.

“You are the-” Tommy was about to say ‘Dark Lord son’, but stopped himself at the last second. “The bastard who interrupted me.” The words fell out before he could stop them. “Pinky’s friend.”

“Pinky?” Wilbur’s eyebrow’s shot up in incredulousness.

“I said what I said.” Tommy sniffed, and then turned and started walking again. If he went to the Ravenclaw dorm room then the Slytherin couldn’t follow him.

Wilbur stepped in front of him, his lip turned up into a half smile. “Do you really not know who I am?”

“Mate,” Tommy breathed through his nose, gathering his patience. “I think you’re going to have a bad time if you’re asking me, a complete stranger, if I know who you are. Maybe you should go to the infirmary if you’ve forgotten your name.”

Wilbur stopped dead in his tracks, and Tommy took his chance and fled. He could feel the weight of eyes on his back. Burning.

From behind him, Tommy heard a soft laugh. His ears getting hot as embarrassment hit him. And Tommy took another corner and booked it back to his dorm. Not stopping until he was on his bed, bag still clutched in his arms, whispering fiercely, “this isn’t funny Kristin. Not funny at all. I swear, I know you are laughing but this isn’t a joking matter.”

He punched his pillow a few times to get the lingering traces of energy out, before he flopped over. Hiding his face behind his hands. He didn’t *want* to talk to Wilbur. He didn’t need him around. Tommy is just fine on his own. He has been the last eighteen years of his life.

“I hate this so much,” Tommy whispered to himself, dragging his hands down his face. “I just want to go home.”

.

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The first time Tommy misplaced something, he didn’t notice it. Not really. He had been certain that his extra quill was in his bag. And he wasn’t good at sharpening the feathers into a fine point with magic, he used a knife for that. His magic was too eager sometimes, and almost always cut the damn things in half. So when his quill’s point snapped, Tommy dug around and found his only other quill gone.

A minor annoyance, really. But Tommy brushed it off. He used the quill as a bookmark, he must’ve forgotten it somewhere. He’d find a new feather in the owlery and use it.

The second and third time things went missing, Tommy also dismissed it with a sigh. But when his *fucking essay was gone* Tommy was suddenly hyper aware of it. He tossed his room, his trunk, his *fucking bed* . And yet-

The scroll was gone.

Did he leave it in the library? He went and checked- and no, it wasn't there. Tommy knew it was due in the morning, and he ended up staying well past midnight to recreate it. Turning it in with only four hours of sleep.

But then it happened *again*. Tommy's robe went missing. And he went the entire day without his soft, worn out robe on. His thin white shirt didn't stop the freezing temperatures as the days shifted into fall weather. He found it with a giant hole ripped into it.

Thankfully, Tommy had always been a penny pincher at heart. And he used a thread and needle he borrowed from the house elves and sewn it back together until it was barely visible. Sure, he could've used magic. But it wouldn't be as nice, and Tommy was afraid the fabric might melt if he tried it.

Two days after, Tommy's bag went missing. He had sworn he put it next to his bed.

He found it in the fountain outside, floating as his books and papers bobbed up and down in the water. And that's when it finally hit him.

He was... getting bullied?

The idea hadn't even crossed his mind until that moment. And he was utterly baffled by it. Tommy had been bullied before. Multiple times. Almost every year there had been some sort of campaign against him. Second year, he could talk to snakes. Third year, with the dementors. Fourth year with the "Minecraft Sinks" badges the Slytherins made during the Triwizard Tournament.

This?

This was a fucking *walk in the park*.

Tommy rolled his pants up and waded into the fountain, picking up every item that fell out of his bag. He could sense people watching him. Eyes burning into his back. Occasionally, he heard a distant laugh as he bent over to pick up his history book.

Tommy glanced up at Hogwarts, and saw nameless faces watching him from the windows. And he rolled his eyes and went back to it. Once he was sure he had everything, he spread them out onto the lip of the fountain, before calling up his magic. It surged up. Desperate to be used. It wrapped around his books, and Tommy watched with folded arms, keeping a careful grip on his magic so it won't light everything on fire. Steam rose up, and the pages were rumpled and bent from the water damage, but they were dry.

He shoved it all back into his bag, the strap neatly stitched together again. Tommy made it three steps before the weight made the leather strap snap again. And everything tumbled out.

Laughter rose up from the windows. And Tommy only sighed again, leaning down, and piling everything back into the beaten bag.

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Tommy set up wards. He should've done it the first night. But he had been sloppy. He had learned later on in life that wards around his bed and property should've been the first thing he did at Hogwarts each school year.

This time was no different. Tommy felt exhausted after piling on spell after spell. All of them from memory. He did this every time he slept somewhere new. Paranoia his best friend, staying with him even in this reality.

This was really his fault. He should've realized that people would snoop. Kids especially. Afterwards, Tommy laid on his bed, feeling the dent in his core. And then realizing with a bit of happiness that it was starting to settle. Two months ago, this would've wiped him on the floor. It would take years. But soon- he'd be at full power again. His core was getting bigger.

Tommy let out a sigh, and closed his eyes. Feeling older than he was. "Kristin, is this really worth it?" He whispered, "everything I do, is it worth it?"

There was no answer.

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The next morning caught Tommy by utter shock. He knew it was fall- he knew the weather was getting colder for the brisk winter snow.

But he forgot about Halloween. Or in this world, with out any muggle influence, All Hallows Eve. There were no cliché decorations this time around. No magically created bats that would fly around the candles in the Great Hall. No fake skeletons propped up in corners to spook the unwise.

There was a garland of black leaves on each table, and there was, surprisingly, pumpkins with candles. But they were on all of the windows, facing out. An old lecture from Ranboo appeared in his head, and Tommy recalled that lit pumpkins were supposed to ward against evil spirits.

Tommy already felt sick. He barely ate anything at breakfast, and he grabbed his bag and left before the other students. Classes were out of the question today.

Every Halloween, Tommy spent alone. His teachers had been kind about it. They knew what Tommy had lost. While the world celebrated, Tommy had been the one to lose everything. Dreamon was dead, for a time. And Halloween was the night he was vanquished.

Wilbur and Sally Soot died. And everybody forgot about it.

Tommy found a quiet corner, dusty and abandoned, and curled up into a ball and mourned for the parents he had. They died for him. But it felt cheap when all Tommy wanted was for them to be alive.

When Tommy emerged from the dungeon at dinnertime, his eyes red and his face were blotchy. The picture of a boy who had spent the last few hours crying. He didn't see Wilbur Minecraft grin behind his cup.

- Wilbur thinks the bullying is getting to Tommy
- Tommy is crying over his dead parents
- These things are not the same
- Tommy literally doesn't notice the bullying half of the time

Notes:

Tommy didn't know that the boy in the defense room who marked up papers was his uncle. All of the photos of Techno in his world were destroyed.

Techno was a death eater. but he died getting the locket from the inferi lake. He's Regulus Black. [author note: {evil cackling} angst]

Tommy had all of this angst knowing that his Uncle was a death eater growing up. and Techno was evil until Tommy found out that he died, getting pulled under the waters by the undead, just to fuck Dream over one last time. And then he was a hero. Somebody he never met, but there was crushing relief knowing that his Uncle wasn't as bad as everybody thought he was.

(In the cave, Tommy was trying to escape the Inferi, and one stopped. Hesitated. It's flesh was half gone, bits of muscles were falling into the churning water, but the skull looked at Tommy. And it stared at him. It had a chance to pull him under. To drown Tommy. But it didn't. It holds up it's hand and waves.)

(Inferi!Techno saw Tommy, and thought he was Wilbur. A final goodbye, not knowing his brother was dead, years prior.)

Once Tommy figures out who pink bastard is- that he is his Uncle Techno, he fucking loses his mind. Caught up in horrific flash backs.

Wilbur tries to wheedle into Tommy's life. Amused and curious about the first year kid who doesn't know manners. Knows that Tommy is smart, ahead in all of his classes, but is considered quiet. So he goes: ah yes, the kiddo wants a friend! And tries to manipulate Tommy into trusting him. As soon as Wilbur figures out what Tommy wants, whether it's power, fame, whatever- then Wilbur can use it against him. What kind of ravenclaw would turn down a chance to learn from a tutor?

((the sorting scene from Tommy pov:

The hat slides on his head and goes "you could be great you kno-" "just want a degree, bro"
"ravenclaw it is"))

Ravenclaws are known for jumping years. Tommy is aiming to do that to graduate early. I think his whole plan was to get into ravenclaw, jump up a few years, graduate and move to France or something.

I think once SBI are closing in on him they move him to Slytherin. Just to keep him close. Philza is the head of Slytherin. Normally his classes are for older years but once Tommy jumps a few grades up, Philza puts him in the front of his class just to keep an eye on him.

i think Tommy's mind is super fucked up it'll be hard for a legilimens to go in there unscathed.

Dadza getting a nosebleed, slowly shutting his eyes and letting out a deep breath as he has to sit down after witnessing the hell that Tommy's mindscape is. I think Tommy's mindscape is Hogwarts during the final battle. The dead bodies and screams are all accurate. That behind every door, if they take another step to find his memories, Tommy lets them have it. They can see the pain, the blood, the abuse, the horror, every single emotion, in stark vivid detail. Tommy could never close his mind, a horcrux in his forehead meant he could never seal it shut. So his defenses were to let them have what they wanted.

Phil sees everything.

He accessed all of Tommy's memories, starting from his most recent all the way to the beginning, and the last thing he sees is a flash of green light and Wilbur's own voice broken and begging *"please, not him, please, not my son, don't hurt him-"*

And a dying scream.

Phil blinks and breaks the connection.

unsure about this bit:

Tommy is pretty sure that Sally is going to do something to Wilbur. And he knows he shouldn't go saving people. He spent his whole childhood believing his parents were in love, that Wilbur had always found the pretty red headed woman and they became sweethearts- until Quackity told him his suspicions after having too much fire whiskey.

There were plenty of dark and dangerous spells that would twist and turn a person into somebody else. Untraceable. Dangerous.

The thought kept him up at night. Another thing that made Tommy so similar to Clay Taken.

Both were born from a lie.

Tommy fights with himself for a bit. Like, he was done sticking his neck out for people. But Wilbur died to protect him.

But this wasn't his father! This was a strange man who felt of dark magic! Clearly this wasn't his father.

Did he deserve to be trapped by magic?

Nobody did.

But Tommy was done saving people! Who else would help Wilbur then? Tommy knew how it would play out. At least, in his home world. Was it worth to ignore it all?

No it wasn't.

He sighs, adjusts his bag, and dreads when he enviably has to step in.

The next time Wilbur tries to wheedle Tommy into spending time with him, to go eat lunch with his friends at the Slytherin table, Tommy bites out, "yeah"

Wilbur blinks in shock, and says, "really?"

"Shut up, fucker." Tommy glares at him, like Wilbur had just personally offended Tommy, "I said yes. Or are you hard of hearing on top of being bald as hell?"

Wilbur drags a hand through his hair and Tommy can see the mask wavering, *cracking* in confusion, "I have hair??"

"I don't see it, bitch." Tommy grumpily replies, stuffing the rest of the items in his bag, and throwing the strap onto his shoulder. "I'm going to lunch. If you aren't there, I'm not going to eat at your shitty lime green table."

"I'll have you know," Wilbur is beside him, his stupidly long legs stretch far beside Tommy's small gait. Tommy never waivered, never letting Wilbur get even *one* step ahead. If he was doing this he wasn't going to let the school rumor mill think he's *beneath* Wilbur. He's a fucking equal here. Tommy knew Slytherin politics, and Wilbur was trying to get ahead. Unwilling to run, but it was a fast pace that Tommy matched evenly. "It's not lime green, it's a fetching shade of emerald."

"And?" Tommy asked, abruptly, trying hard not to show he was out of breath already. Damn his short feeble kid body. He had been trying to walk more and eat to make up the lack of food in his earlier days, but the effects of starvation was long lasting. He had to step twice as much as the twink did. "I don't care what color your house is. It's still fucking ugly to me."

"Speaking of, which houses did the hat offer you?" Wilbur changed the subject, and Tommy's grip on the bag strap grew tighter. "I remember you were under the hat for quite a while before it said Ravenclaw."

"Fuck off, it was two minutes." Tommy snapped, "that wasn't a long time." Hell, when Tommy had been in his world, Ranboo's sorting took three minutes. His former friend once said it was because the hat was determined to put him in Ravenclaw, and he had been in near tears the entire time asking for a different house, any house, that wasn't the blue one.

Tommy never questioned Ranboo why he refused to go to the home of the bookworms, he would've fit right in with the rest of them. And Ranboo never said why.

Of course, Tubbo's sorting was instant. The floppy hat touching his blonde friend's head before hollering, "GRYFFINDOR." And that was that.

("you could be great, you know")

"I was just wondering," Wilbur shrugged, and suddenly the fast pace slowed down as Wilbur stopped trying to walk in front of Tommy. Good. Asshole. "We have a program that lets you switch houses, if you feel like a change."

"I was asking it where the loo was, bitch." Tommy bit out, "and if ghosts haunted them."

There wasn't a Moaning Amsiey this time. Clay hadn't killed her with the basilisk. She lived and moved on elsewhere, at least, if she existed in this world.

Tommy didn't know what Wilbur was going to react, but his dirty shoes halted as Wilbur laughed. The noise was achingly familiar. Tommy made the same noise, and it was almost an out of body experience to hear it coming from somebody else.

Once upon a time, Wilbur was Tommy's dad. And it was a sudden painful shock to know, that at eighteen years of age, not counting the sudden loss of years his body got, he got his laugh from his father.

Tommy had accepted his was an orphan ages ago, but it was a wound he thought it closed up. He hadn't felt it hurt. Not since his third year when he was convinced he saw his father cast a patronus to save his life. And then later on, after realizing it was him who did it after using the time turner.

"Are you okay?" Wilbur asked suddenly, breaking into Tommy's thoughts. They had stopped walking, and, much to Tommy's annoyance, Wilbur was in front of him.

He wasn't in charge of Tommy. His *real* father died to protect him. This man might share his face and name, but he was just a stranger to Tommy.

"Whatever," Tommy brushed past Wilbur, bumping into his shoulder on purpose. "I'm hungry. I hope you guys don't eat only green shit on your table."

Wilbur was next to him in a blink, a jovial smile on his lips. Fake. A lie. *Slytherin*. "We aren't vegetarians, if that is what you're implying."

"Tough shit, I am." Tommy shot back, "I'm bound to it. I was hoping you'd at least have carrots, you fucking savage."

Tommy knew it was going to happen. A part of him hoped it would be difference between the two worlds, that history didn't repeat itself this time. Another part hoped that it didn't happen in the first place, and that his Quackity's theory was wrong. He could still smell the firewhiskey on Quackity's breath, mixed with the stench of cigarettes as the words tumbled out of the Azkaban's Prisoners mouth.

("There was something wrong. I just know it, Wil. You moved on after her last rejection, but when you started chasing her again I should've *known*. Sally was a right bitch until you started looking at other girls-")

Merlin, he hoped it was wrong.

[tommy and wilbur have gotten closer and now Wilbur has been Cursed by Sally.]

One morning, after the younger Quackity shepherd Tommy to the Slytherin's table, Tommy grumpily sat down next to Wilbur, in the same spot he always did. And for once, Wilbur didn't throw an arm around Tommy's shoulders. Instead, he was staring off into the distance, towards the table on the other side of the room.

Wilbur hummed, a dazed expression on his face. It was barely there, past the mask that Wilbur wore. But Tommy hadn't seen that look in his eyes before. Wilbur was perfectly put together, his hair in perfect coils that Tommy could never replicate. His tie was straight, his shirt was without wrinkles, and Tommy couldn't see anything wrong with him.

But that didn't mean he didn't feel a sinking brick in his stomach.

Wilbur didn't even glance at Tommy, barely even noticing that the boy was next to him. Tommy gave him a hard look, before turning to Quackity.

"What's wrong with him?"

Quackity rolled his eyes, "he's back at it again. I thought he stopped after last year, but it looks like Wil's back chasing around a certain red-headed girl."

No. Please no.

"She isn't just any red-headed girl," Wilbur spoke up for the first time, breaking his distant stare to give Quackity a *look*. "She's... perfect. Sally Salmon. The prettiest girl-"

"Here we go," Quackity muttered into his cup of pumpkin juice, giving Tommy a grimace. "He's been like this since our second year."

"Shut up." Wilbur grumbled.

“I thought-” Tommy’s voice broke, and he cleared it before talking again, keeping the wavering fear out of his words. “I thought you said you were over her?”

“Apparently not,” Q didn’t look impressed, and Wilbur ignored Tommy entirely to stare off into the distance. Watching the redhead with long hair, sitting with the rest of her year mates. Tommy watched her as well, and Sally slowly curled a lock of her hair behind her ear and glanced over at Wilbur before looking away. A blush forming on her cheeks.

That was his mother. And Wilbur was still the epitome of Slytherin posture. His face didn’t give away any of his thoughts, but there was something soft in his eyes. The way the corner of his mouth refused to stay flat, but crooked up occasionally-

Fuck, Tommy had to make sure.

He stood up, the bench sliding back just a bit as he stretched across the table, picking up one of the silver candelabra that held several lit candles on it. He knew he gathered the attention of several of the Slytherins, but Tommy had lost his ability to give a fuck if people were watching him. He turned and held out the candelabra towards Wilbur, “hey fuckface, what’s this?”

Tommy watched as Wilbur blinked, slower than usual, to look at object in Tommy’s hand. It was his eyes that Tommy paid attention to. The hazel eyes, stared at the candle, and Wilbur opened his mouth to talk shit-

His pupils weren’t moving. Wilbur’s eyes were looking into the light and they weren’t constricting-

Wilbur was cursed.

Sure, it was a simple test. It didn’t mean it was a curse. It could be anything. Hell, even pepper up could do that-

But Tommy had never seen Wilbur take a pepper up, let alone another potion. He knew of seventh years who downed it like it was tea, but Wilbur always stayed away from it.

Tommy couldn’t stop the horror that spread out in his chest. Like a dam breaking, flooding his insides. He placed the candelabra onto his plate with a loud clatter and he was on his feet-walking away. Pressing a hand over his mouth to stop himself from losing what little breakfast he already ate.

Wilbur was under some kind of magical influence. He was acting out of character. He was besotted with Sally-

It was true.

Tommy crashed into a bathroom door and the world was turning to a mess of colors. He couldn’t focus. Instead he slammed open a stall door and his knees hit the ground as he retched into the toilet.

It was *true*.

His whole life was built on a lie.

The cold tiled floor bit into his thin pants, and Tommy could feel a feverish heat start to crawl down his neck. Ever since he was eleven and he stood in front of a mirror that showed him his hearts desire, Tommy always wanted a family. *His* family. The one that he never had-

And that was a lie.

Wilbur never loved Sally. She cursed him and used him and stolen Wilbur from his family. He knew that Wilbur had a terrible fight with his brother and father, and soon after, they died during the war. Philza wouldn't have gotten a heart attack, Technoblade wouldn't have died for nothing, and Tommy shouldn't have existed in the first place. Everything was built on a lie. He was a boy born from stolen free will.

He was just like Clay.

No. *No*. Tommy wasn't a fucking mad man who destroyed the wizarding world. He wasn't a murderer, he wasn't evil, he didn't-

Tommy wiped his hands down his face, feeling the clammy skin against his burning forehead. The scar still red and puckered since he died a second time, destroying the horcrux in his head. The curse scar still hummed and throbbed, and right now every heart beat sent a stabbing pain into his head.

It was all a lie.

Tommy couldn't let this happen again.

He needed to tell somebody. Stop the tragedy from happening again.

But first he needed to have a melt down somewhere quiet while he thinks about how his entire life was built on a lie. Then he could gather up enough energy to deal with the utter shit storm that will blow up in his face.

He just... needed a minute. Just a couple. And then he'll be fine again.

It'll be okay. He can survive. He always has.

He just needs a minute.

Things are very different in this world. The strangest part was the lack of blood purity propaganda. The idea that muggleborns were lesser never crossed the minds of the wizards and witches here, and it made Tommy feel flat footed. The whole reason behind the war didn't exist. There wasn't a Clay Taken here to raise up that bigoted belief, and it made Tommy scared when he wasn't before.

Sure, if people asked, he would without hesitation tell them he was a half blood. His mother was a muggleborn, his father pureblood. He was proud of it, knowing that his parents loved each other enough to look past how the world viewed them.

But that was a lie. A fucking, horrible, lie.

If anybody in Tommy's home world ever found out about Sally's deceit, the press would have a field day. And it would just be another nail in Tommy's coffin, the similarities between him and Clay would spark another outrage and people would call him a Dark Lord.

Again.

Kristin said they would've killed him anyways. No matter what he did. Tommy couldn't stop the anger that rose up from at thought of it. He did *everything* to save the wizarding world. And they killed him. He could feel his magic starting to break apart the careful box he kept it in, and Tommy had to stop and breathe. Calming himself down. Making sure his magic was tucked back inside, and hidden.

He stood in front of a door. It had been the room Tommy had learned transfiguration in when he was a child, but it was one of the many differences since coming to this world. The heavy wood was stained dark, and Tommy could feel the magic of the man who stood inside of the room.

There were other people inside, but none of them could possibly compete against the Headmaster. The Dark Lord. His magic had that same gritty pitch black aura that Dreamon's did. But the two lord's magic were on opposite sides of the spectrum. Dream's was like shattered dried clay. Angry and always sharp, reaching out and stabbing at anything. Philza's was smooth and it reminded Tommy of the texture of quills. Feathery and soft, but even a quill can cut.

There was a curious air in the magic. And Tommy had been standing outside of the door for too long. Of course, the Headmaster would know that Tommy was there.

This wasn't like walking into the forbidden forest, knowing that Tommy was meant to die all along. Going to Dreamon and letting him strike Tommy down with another death spell. This was a stroll along the beach at this point.

Tommy still hesitated. For fucks sake, he faced so many dangerous creatures and opponents. But the idea of facing his *grandfather* was what made him scared. Where was his Gryffindor bravery?

The longer he waited, the more he was putting it off. He could feel the curiosity turning into impatience. Philza wasn't going to wait for much longer. And Tommy let himself waiver for a few more seconds before steeling himself and knocking on the wooden door.

A beat. "Come in."

Tommy opened the door and peeked inside. It was the middle of class- fuck, Tommy should be in his own class right now. It looked like a fourth year class, heads bowed low over parchments and quills were scratching at the leathery paper. A few heads raised up to look at the intruder.

This was the class of dark arts. A subject not taught to first years. Tommy didn't shuffle, but he uneasily shifted on his feet. "Yes, how can I help you?" The voice came from the front of the room, and Tommy glanced to see the Headmaster. Tommy tried to avoid looking at the man, always keeping his eyes away from the owner of dark magic.

But he couldn't help but notice that the phrase that Tommy had grown up hearing from every adult wizard he knew of was true. "You look just like your grandfather, a spitting image of him." They said, patting Tommy on the head with a look of fake sympathy in their eyes. He had seen photos of Philza. But it was different than seeing the man in real life.

Their blonde hair was the same shade, Philza's blue eyes were bright like Tommy's, and when Tommy had been older he could see Philza's face in the mirror. It was a near match, with the exception of Tommy's curly hair, which he got from his father. His grandfather was sitting on the edge of his desk, looking like a proper wizard. His outer robe was missing, his sleeves rolled up his forearms, and the signature black wings were gleaming in the shade.

That was another odd thing. Magical inheritances were accepted here as well. Tommy didn't know what to do with that information. He knew of a few students who received them when they were older, but they never came back the following year at Hogwarts.

Depending on what they became, they were not considered a wizard anymore. And some had their wands snapped or destroyed. Or they went to different schools where they were accepted.

Did Tommy's real grandfather had wings? Or was that unique to this world? Yet another mystery added to Tommy's long list of things he wished he knew about his real family. But he could never find out.

Tommy steeled himself, keeping his eyes trained on the ground in front of Philza. The words he spoke were bold, but the way Tommy said them made them uncertain and timid, "excuse me for interrupting, Headmaster. Could I have a word with you?"

He's a first year. He needed to act like one.

"Sure mate," Philza clapped his hands together, "step into my office and we can have a quick chat. Class, please continue transcribing the fourth chapter and place your summaries on my desk when you're done."

Tommy stepped into the classroom, and the dark magic curled around him. He could feel Philza guiding it around him, brushing it against Tommy's skin. Poking curiously. It took an immense amount of self control to keep Tommy's magic from lashing out. It was rude to test another's magic. Most wizards didn't have the ability to sense magic like Tommy could, but it was clear that Philza was testing the waters.

Tommy breathed out his nose, trying to let the sudden surge of anger go. This wasn't a battle to be fought. He was here for Wilbur. And then, after Wilbur was safe from being trapped in a loveless marriage, Tommy can avoid him for the rest of his life again.

He had only allowed Wilbur to get close so Tommy knew when to step in and stop things from happening. Nothing more.

The office door clicked behind Tommy as he entered, Phil already sitting at his chair behind the ornate desk. The office was plain, and didn't hold anything particularly interesting. Probably because this was for when Philza was teaching, his Headmaster office was probably where he put his things.

"So, how can I help you. Mister Innit, correct?" Philza smiled warmly. Tommy eyes darted around, unsure where to place them, until they landed on Philza's chin. Not quite meeting his eyes. "How are you doing your first year here at Hogwarts?"

"It's fine." Tommy spoke neutrally, "you're Wilbur's father, correct?" He asked, as if Tommy didn't know intimately who his family was. He spent ages pouring over their portraits when he was younger and the photos gifted to him his first year.

"I am indeed. I've noticed that Wilbur has taken you under his wing. He talks a fair bit about you," Phil's magic pokes at Tommy again, and Tommy's hand tightens in his robe sleeve.

The words, "*oh really? He's never spoke about you,*" was on the tip of Tommy's tongue. But he bit them back. He should treat Philza like the Slytherin he was. The man wore emerald green robes, for Merlin's sake. Tommy needed to tread carefully.

Even though the magic poking at him made him want to cast bombarda on everything.

"I wanted to ask if you noticed if Wilbur was acting off today," Tommy pushed forwards, "he was being... weird."

"Weird how?" The Dark Lord cocks his head to the side, and the magic surrounding Tommy stills.

Tommy needed to get his act together. It was easy to act embarrassed, the laser like focus on him making the blush on his cheeks appear naturally. He rubbed his neck awkwardly, letting his gaze fall on the ground. "He was talking about some girl? And staring at her all morning." He was a eleven year old kid. Kids don't know about love potions. That information was restricted to older years.

"Oh," Phil lets out a breath, "that. Yes, I am aware of my sons infatuation. I thought he moved on, but he is one that never let old habits die."

"It's not just that," Tommy trailed off, fidgeting, "I'm pretty sure he was... acting weirder? His eyes were funny? I don't know much about magic, I'm muggleborn-" what a lie, "but I'm pretty sure that Wilbur's eyes weren't working? If that makes sense. I'm sorry. I know this sounds really stupid." He trailed off, keeping his eyes on the ground.

"How were they not working?"

Hook.

“Um,” Tommy couldn’t help but feel his face get warmer, “you know how you look at bright lights and your pupils get small? His didn’t do that? I don’t know. Is that some kind of wizard thing?” He scratched at the side of his face, before peering up at Philza. Keeping his eyes from ever making contact with the Dark Lord’s.

The magic around him grew deadly still. And Tommy’s heart skipped a beat, all he could imagine that it was a snake stilling as they found new prey. It coiled around him. And it could very easily crush Tommy if it wanted to. It brushed up against his legs.

Line.

“I see.” Phil said mildly, “don’t be sorry, Mister Innit. I’ll look in it. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I’ll visit Wilbur and see if anything wrong.”

“Thank you,” Tommy breathed, the flash of relief on his face wasn’t fake either. “I’ll let you get back to class.” He shuffled towards the door, but the magic tugged on his robe.

“Mister Innit?”

Tommy swallowed, and turned. “Yes, Headmaster?” His voice timid and thin.

“Thank *you*,” Philza stood up and Tommy’s heart skipped a beat. Philza was tall, his shadow falling over his gentle expression, “for being a good friend to my son.”

Sinker.

“Of course, Headmaster.” Tommy bowed his head in a traditional wizarding farewell and got the fuck out of there.

The magic followed him, sticking to his clothes and lingering until Tommy closed the door to the classroom and bolted. Racing down the hallway to get enough space between the Dark Lord and himself. The tendrils of magic tugged on Tommy, trying to pull him back. But he ignored it, and eventually it detached, returning to it’s master. Leaving Tommy feeling like he just bathed in mud. A lingering dark residue on his clothes and skin where it touched.

Tommy decided his classes weren’t worth the effort today, and headed to his dormitory, determined to get the gritty feeling off of him. If everything went to plan, Wilbur would be saved. And things would go back to normal. Tommy didn’t have to deal with Wilbur Minecraft anymore, and that would be brilliant. He could finally go back to being a faceless nobody.

Of course, the Minecraft curse would never let him be normal. But Tommy can be optimistic.

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Wilbur was missing for a few days. Tommy saw the spot open up at the head of the Slytherin table. And he pointedly ignored Quackity’s effort to bring him to the green table. Tommy is a

Ravenclaw. He does book shit. And like, essays and whatever. Learning. He didn't belong at the snake table.

It was great. To be back to normal. Life pattered on in it's normal, non-life threatening way. And Tommy reveled in it. No three headed dogs, no escaped convicts, no dark lord (sans one headmaster) gunning for Tommy's life.

He was eleven fucking years old and life was delightfully normal. Tommy never thought he'd be like his aunt and uncle, who craved normality like it was cocaine. But here he was, absolutely loving the monotony of being a kid who didn't have the world on his shoulders.

The first year classes were pathetically easy. Except for astrology. Tommy could point out the north star, and that was all he had needed while on the run. It helped loads when the three of them were traveling by foot in the forest, peering up at the sky to make sure they were on track. They could only move during the darkness, and Tommy didn't need to know about the other constellations.

Hey, he couldn't be brilliant at everything this time around. He did have an unfair advantage that he already lived through his classes. Although, the quality of the teachers and content was significantly higher than before. The ghost for History was missing. And a real teacher droned on about other things than goblins for the first time. This was also unfamiliar to Tommy, but he soaked up the words like a sponge. He couldn't tell if this worlds history was different from the one he grew up in, but it was fascinating nonetheless.

The world was blissfully normal, until Wilbur showed up again. A bit paler than before. But he strode across the halls with his head high and his back straight. Good for him. But Tommy had done his duty.

Chapter End Notes

My friend, Bitsinboots, author of Secret of Being Colorful and I have made a discord (MULTIFANDOM NOW as of April 2024) server together. It is a 15+ age server. And it's a dictatorship. But if you'd like to come hang out with us, feel free. Here is the [discord link](#).

HermitCraft AU Battle of the Dads

Chapter Summary

ngl i forgot i wrote this whole thing until a friend talked to me about hermit craft fics and i went "heeeeyy wait a second"

Set in Seventh Season of Hermit Craft

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There were very few things that demanded Xisuma's time and attention outside of the Hermitcraft server. Being an admin, those responsibilities only doubled. But he wouldn't trade it for the world. The community he built here, with all of his fellow hermits, was truly the greatest thing he had ever crafted.

It was a necessary evil to leave the server. He had to deal with the Update. And by doing so, he has to meet up with other admins and take a long look at the code before even thinking of adding it to his server.

Some admins never glanced at the code. Just applying the Update without a second thought. But Xisuma wasn't one to do that. Horror stories of patches in the universe throwing players into the void, chunks erroring out, and the whole server crashing down because of a negligent admin was enough to push him out of his server.

It didn't help that this was a Big Update. Rumors of code being found with new mobs being added. New terrain being created from the ather, unseen by anybody else-

It prompted FalseSymmetry, Xisuma's only mod on the server, to request to come see it too.

Xisuma was already anxious about leaving. But with the only mod he trusted to keep things fair and calm on the server coming with him upped it by a thousand percent.

False had convinced him that it would be fine. Xisuma believed in her. He always did. Everybody was an adult on the server. They knew how to behave themselves. Still, Xisuma did put out a notice that any large redstone works should wait until he returned. He didn't want Etho to shatter a chunk and be unable to fix it in time.

What if something happened. And Xisuma wasn't here to fix it? What if his hermits, his *players*, got lost? Somehow adrift in the voids between servers? What if their connect snaps with the main hub and-

“Here is your shulker,” a box was placed in Xisuma’s hand. His gauntlet closed around it automatically. “I put a few little extra goodies for you two.” Grian winked up at him, “some honey, for a bee-zy man like yourself.”

Xisuma laughed, his bee costume this season making the hermits come up with dozens of different puns. Grian’s wings fluffed up, obviously happy he made the tense admin laugh. And Xisuma could help but sigh under his mask, relaxing his shoulders.

“Thank you.”

“No problem!” Grian nudged his shoulder, “go read some boring code and tell us what you find! The next season builds depends on what you say.”

“You’ll be safe?” Xisuma couldn’t help but worry. “And don’t start anything, okay? I know you and Scar are having a little war, but try not to blow up the shopping district.”

“I won’t! The mycelium resistance is secretive enough not to blow up everything.” Grian waved his hand dismissively. He leaned in quietly, “you didn’t hear this from me. But I heard that Mumbo is the *leader* of this resistance.” And then Grian leaned back, wiggling his eyebrows.

Xisuma snorted, and from behind him, he heard False pickaxe the last of her shulkers. “I’m leaving you in charge, Grian. Try not to break anything. And no outsiders, remember? I recall you inviting Joel here last time I left.”

“I’ve never did that in my life. Joel is an outlier and should not be counted.” Grian joked, and Xisuma snorted.

“Just because I said you’re in charge doesn’t mean you have any power. I trust you to keep the server civil if anything comes up.”

“Buzzkill.”

“What was that?”

“I said, uh. Bees kill. You know they’re dangerous, X.” Grian rubbed the back of his neck.

Xisuma couldn’t help but smile fondly. “I’ll be back. Maybe in a month, depends on how big the Big Update is.”

“You got it captain!” Grain saluted, and then pushed Xisuma towards the server portal. “Now go. I know you’re stalling.”

“Make sure Scar doesn’t die too often. And that Bdubs doesn’t oversleep. You know how he tends to abuse the bed. And remember to feed Mumbo-”

Grian pushed Xisuma towards the portal, unrelenting. False laughed, shaking her head.

“Xisuma, he knows. He does it already.”

“Yes, but-”

Error.

Overflow integer detected. Program: Minecraft 1.15.2

And overflow of memory has been detected which has corrupted the programs internal state. The program cannot be safely continue execution and must now be terminated.

Error.

Players 23/~~26~~ detected.

Server cannot be terminated.

Server has been locked. No messages can be delivered outside of the server. Please contact your admin [XisumaVoid] for assistance. For more information, contact www.minecraft.org for details.

An Automated Message has appeared: I am very disappointed you Etho/Tango/Mumbo/Doc for breaking my server. I know it was one of you. - X

“What...” Grian mumbled, staring at the words until they faded away. He felt his comm buzzing in his pocket wildly. Everybody had seen the messages. Everybody felt the moment the server snapped it’s connection to the main hub. Leaving them stranded in their server. No way in. No way out.

Scar and Grian eyes met, their jaws hanging open.

“What on earth!” Scar exclaimed.

“But, but, but-” Grian stuttered, his face pale. “We haven’t even *done* anything yet!” Grian wailed, throwing his hands into the air in misery.

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“Don’t trust anybody, Tommy.”

The words rattled around Tommy’s head. Wilbur’s whispered voice clanging and clashing. Tommy could vividly recall the moment when Wilbur knelt down in Pogtopia, clasping a hand too tightly against his shoulders, a unhinged light in his eyes-

It wasn’t the first time Wilbur scared Tommy. But it had been the first time bruises were left behind. It wasn’t the last, either.

Pogtopia did something to Wilbur. Tommy wasn’t sure what. But his brother lost everything during the election. He said that Tommy was too young to understand, but in the same breath whispered he had been betrayed by *everybody* .

Tommy wasn’t too young. He was a big man! The biggest. He might be really short, even for an eight year old. But that was because of ‘mal-nu-tri-tion’ and not Tommy’s fault. Wilbur

said he didn't eat enough greens but Tommy could argue back that living on the streets meant finding whatever shit to eat off the ground, he didn't have a choice *to* eat greens.

Tubbo understood. He didn't live as long as Tommy did on the streets. The older teen always set aside time for Tommy. Even after the festival where Technoblade hit him with a bunch of rockets.

Tommy had been really worried. But Wilbur said that Tubbo deserved it.

It took Tubbo three whole weeks to come back to Pogtopia. And even then, he only came when Techno was out doing his 'mysterious things.' He had bandages all over his head and chest, and Tommy never knew that rockets could burn somebody that bad.

Tommy didn't think Tubbo deserved anything like that.

Wilbur got really mad when Tommy said Tubbo came by. He threw things around and started talking to himself. Tommy fled back to his room, and Wilbur didn't even notice. His voice echoing around in the ravine. Raging and screaming.

He was right, in the end. Wilbur always told the truth.

Tommy hadn't been smart enough to realize that Wilbur had also been talking about himself when he told Tommy to *never trust anybody*. Tommy had been caught in the middle of L'Manburg when Wilbur pressed the button. And when Technoblade released the withers.

He had seen it when the dark shape flew down from the sky and pressed a sword tenderly against Wilbur's stomach. Sliding in like a hug, embracing Wilbur. Before slowly letting the body fall against the burning ground. It had Wilbur's face. But it wasn't Tommy's brother anymore. The body was... just a body now.

The creature still held the bloody sword looked up, and Tommy fled. Into the streets of screaming people. The buildings demolished and burning bright against the dark sky. Ash burned in Tommy's lungs. He didn't know where to go.

He doesn't recall what happened that night. Nothing but screams and ash falling from the sky like snow. He thinks he heard Technoblade laughing. But it was all a blur.

He woke up in Tubbo's bed, the teen asleep in the chair next to him. The haggard boy looked worse off than Tommy, but it was nothing compared to seeing L'manburg in the daylight. The ruins of Wilbur's country was nothing but rubble and ash and wither roses hiding in the shadows, ready to take yet another life.

"Don't trust anybody, Tommy."

The words came back when Tubbo, now the president, looked Tommy in the eyes and *exiled* him.

Tommy didn't see it coming. The backstabbing betrayal. At least Quacktiy was taking his side. Yelling at Tubbo's pale face that, "it's fucked up man, exiling a *eight year old*. He's just a kid!"

Dream didn't move from where he leaned up against the wall. His mask didn't move. His body language was calm. But even so, Tommy felt the sinking pit of his stomach fall sharply.

He couldn't leave with Dream. It would be a very, very bad idea.

Tubbo said Tommy had to leave the next morning. So Tommy had time to pack and say goodbye and shit.

Quackity said he'd come by every single day in exile, swearing up and down that Tommy wouldn't be alone.

"Don't trust anybody, Tommy."

Wilbur never lied. Tommy hated him but he was still his brother. And his older brother knew what he was talking about. He always had Tommy's safety in mind. This must've been why Wilbur didn't like Tubbo so much. Or Quackity. He didn't trust anybody, not even Technoblade.

Tommy should've learned his lesson the first time around.

The night he was exiled, he fled. Fuck L'Manburg. Wilbur had it right trying to blow it up. Tommy couldn't trust anybody. Not even Ghostbur. He wasn't going to go with Dream, the fucker had it out for Tommy ever since... ever. Tommy didn't know why, but he was always fucking creepy.

Tommy threw a bunch of shit that wasn't his in his inventory and made his way out of the obsidian walls, running into the untouched wilderness of the smp.

And then-

Then....

Tommy slipped?

He wasn't sure.

It was scary. Something was really scary. And Tommy had been running and-

He fell.

And then he- died?

Respawning at 

You have no home bed or respawn anchor, or it was obstructed.

Fuck. Tommy was at respawn. At least it hadn't been a canon life. Or he would've died died. He had been on his last heart.

Instead of the shitty smp spawn point, however, Tommy heard water crashing against rocks. Sand, gritty and bumpy, dug into his back and wings. He opened his eyes, and the sun was glaring down at him.

That wasn't right either. It had been in the middle of the night. The sun wouldn't suddenly hit the middle of the sky. Not unless Dream did a admin command.

Tommy covered his eyes and shakily stood up. His battered sneakers sliding in the- sand? There wasn't any sand at respawn last time Tommy had checked. It had been in the middle of the fucking forest, with prime path nearby and-

Tommy looked up and saw the ocean. Crystal blue waves washing up and down. The air felt fresh, the scent of gunpowder and ash missing. A gentle breeze blew past him, fluffing up Tommy's feathers.

There were buildings in the distance. Tommy stared at the strange shapes. They were tall. And crooked. And... what does *toon towers* mean?

It finally hit Tommy that this was almost certainly not the Dream SMP. Had he fallen into somebodies server by accident? He dug into his pocket, pulling out his communicator. The things were neigh indestructible. Tommy had lost count how many times he's thrown it off a cobblestone tower. But-

Tommy clicked the buttons and *nothing* appeared. The screen stayed black. He furiously pressed the buttons several times before tossing it onto the ground. It sank into the sand. Fuckign *figures*.

He can't even message anybody. Not that he wanted to. Tommy ran a hand through his hair.

What would Wilbur do?

He'd take stock of the situation. Tommy glanced around himself. There were dozens of boats bobbing up in the water. Left from players who didn't need to take them back. There were... signs. A couple of chests-

Tommy accessed his inventory. And nearly sighed when he saw all of his shit in it. He didn't have *much* but a stack of pearls and an iron sword and tools was all he needed. His armor was gone, maybe it was because he had been wearing it.

Tommy took a step towards the chests, the ones labeled *Hermit Loan items* - which to him sounded like free shit- when he heard the sound of fireworks.

Oh fuck.

The iron shovel was in his hand, Tommy digging at the sand rapidly. He hit dirt, and he threw the blocks above his head and crouched. His heart ramming into his ribcage. Fear lighting up every nerve in his body.

He was going to find him. He was going to get Tommy and then-

The thoughts slipped away quickly. Tommy tried to grasp it, but the memory vanished. Leaving behind the impression that he better fucking hide or he will lose his final life.

“Hello?” Somebody called out. They didn’t sound like anybody Tommy knew. And he knew basically *everybody* on the server.

That was proof then. Tommy had fucking glitched into another server. An *occupied* server. His communicator was fucking shot. There was no way to message anybody Tommy knew. He didn’t even know the Dream SMP chords, Wilbur had been the one to bring them to the new server. He didn’t know how to get back-

Did Tommy want to go back?

The thought made him pause.

“Hello? Is somebody here?” Right, the stranger. Who might possibly kill Tommy for intruding. They could take Tommy’s final life. “I won’t hurt you, I promise. We just want to talk. No harm, no foul.”

Never trust anybody.

Fat fucking chance. Tommy *learned* this lesson. Forever ago.

He curled up in the dark. Tommy might not have his shitty broken communicator, but he still had access to the interface. He didn’t have to try very hard. He closed his eyes and in the corner of his vision, the tab of players flickered up.

There were a lot of them. Tommy scanned through the names, a few of them looked kind of familiar. Wasn’t a few of these guys bigshots? Tommy had loved watching videos of other players, but Wilbur blocked it on his communicator. Said he shouldn’t watch those kinds of things.

Tommy wasn’t watching anything *bad* . It had been bedwars. It was just a game. But Wilbur said it was too violent.

Where had he seen the name Grian again? It looked really familiar.

There was another rocket, and a crunch of boots against the sand. They were nearby. Tommy clapped a hand over his mouth, staring up at the name tags that appeared through the dirt.

BDoubleO100 and *DocM77* moved above him.

“You see anything?” The one with the tag *BDoubleO100* said. His voice boomed. Even through the dirt, Tommy could hear every word.

“No,” *DocM77* voice was *deep* . Almost gravely. It made Tommy’s feathers puff up in fright. This *DocM77* wasn’t human. A hybrid of some kind? It made Tommy shiver.

“Do you think they even came here? Maybe they glitched respawned somewhere else?” *BDoubleO100* asked, “it wasn’t a hack was it?”

“No, Xisuma’s firewalls are too solid to let in a hacker.”

Xisuma... now that was a *really* familiar name. It was on the tip of Tommy’s tongue. He could practically taste the knowledge. But it evaded him.

“So a glitch?”

“That’s what I’m thinking.” DocM77 said. His words were hissy. Like he was a snake. A snake hybrid was scary. “His name shows up in the tab. The server has marked him as a player.”

Tommy checked, and yep. TommyInnit was on the list. Right next to Renthedog and Ethoslab.

“Wait- what’s this?”

They were right above his head now. Tommy curled up tighter.

“Don’t trust anybody, Tommy,” the words whispered in his head.

“A communicator.” DocM77 hissed out. He sounded angry.

Oh *shit*.

Tommy’s communicator. He had dropped on the ground. He had meant to pick it up again, but he forgot to-

“He was here. Whoever TommyInnit is. He spawned in.” BdoubleO100 mused, “he could’ve taken one of the boats.”

“The island is surrounded by land. He could be anywhere.”

“I hope he didn’t go to Keralis’ base. The city is massive. It would be a pain to search for him there.”

“We need to let the other hermits know. We can start a search. We know this place better than he does.”

Hermits?

Wait.

It hadn’t registered earlier when Tommy read the sign. But wasn’t there a server that was like, full of the most fucked up people ever? Geniuses, monsters, abominations that lived in the dark, they all came together and lived in an exclusive server-

Tommy remembered where he heard the name Xisuma before.

XisumaVoid, the star eater.

Tommy remembered hearing the rumor the one time Wilbur took him to visit Hypixel. Tommy had gotten lost, and he heard the people whispering about Star Eater had raided a server. He ate the sun, the moon, and all the stars- leaving the server bathed in complete darkness. They said that even torches couldn't stop the mobs from spawning, leaving the server overrun with monsters that never stopped coming.

The players had to evacuate the server, leaving the admin behind. Never to be seen again.

Tommy shivered, a small scared chirp slipping from behind his hands.

The name tags above him paused. "Did you hear that?" Docm77 asked. Fear shot through Tommy's heart.

If they found him, they would kill him. Not only that, they would break his code. There wouldn't be just a ghost of Tommy floating around, they would *erase* him.

Hermitcraft did not intruders live.

"No?" BDoubleO100 replied, "maybe it was a seagull?"

DocM77 didn't move. Tommy stared up, wide eyed, at the name tag right above his head.

"Hm." It sounded like a *growl*.

"Well, at least we know that TommyInnit hasn't seen our messages." BDoubleO100 said, "his communicator is broken. Maybe we can pull some information off of it?"

"Tango is good at that."

Tango? As in the *fucking blood vampire* TangoTek? Redstone genius but could kill a town? *That* Tango? Somebody stole one of his designs and he found the guys server and left his code in *pieces*.

Tommy was starting to see how terrible this situation he was in.

He had to get off this fucking server.

Now that Tommy knew where he was, he could pick out the names of the monsters he's heard of. The tab list was full of unknown faces, but Tommy knew what kind of monstrosities they've committed.

ZombieCleo, the Doctor Frankenstien of players. Shoving codes together to make hellish beasts. Using her own body first for her experiments, and then stealing whatever she liked from other players and adding to her own form. Last Tommy heard, she had been using mannequins to make human like frozen statues. She particularly liked to use *real heads* on them.

Renthedog, a werewolf. Tommy heard he was fucking *huge*. Turning into a massive wolf that could eat a player in three bites.

GoodTimesWithScar, a siren. Luring people into dark shadows, never to be seen again.

All of these people were on the same server. And they were *looking* for him. Tommy closed his eyes, dismissing the tab of player names.

“I don’t see any other clues. Let’s go inform the others.” BDoubleO100 said, and Tommy flinched when he heard a rocket go off nearby. His name tag zoomed away. And shortly afterwards, DocM77 joined him.

“What the fuck-” Tommy whispered to himself.

Ding! You have been pinged for bad language. You have: 1 out of 3 warnings used. Time for warning reset is: 23:59:58. If you exceed three warnings, you will be muted until they have been reset.

An automated message has appeared: No foul language on the server please -X

“You have got to be shitting me.”

Ding! You have been pinged for bad language. You have: 2 out of 3 warnings used. Time for warning reset is: 23:59:36-

Tommy waved the message away from his vision. A baby lock??? On swearing?!? That was the so stupid.

He really had to get off this server now. He can’t believe there was a shitty lock on swearing. What was this? A kindergarten server? He wasn’t a fucking baby. He was eight years old and he was the biggest fucking maniest man ever to exist.

Tommy only left servers with Wilbur. He didn’t know where to *find* the exit portal. There was one usually around spawn but the island he was one was bare with the exception of a few chests. The admin can move it elsewhere. But it has to be a public spot. Even Tommy knew that law.

If Tommy had a working com, he could query the server. It would tell him the cords to the exit portal. It was one of those things that no admin could ever hide. It was part of the system as a whole.

But he didn’t have a comm. All he had was his interface. He got general world chat messages and alerts. He could whisper but why the fuck would he do that?

‘Ah yes, hello Mister Etho sir, don’t mind me asking where the exit portal is? I am definitely not going to be there for you to kill me and wipe me off the server.’ Yeah, fuck that. Tommy was going to figure it out on his own. Places like this had maps. If not here, then Tommy knew the recipe on how to make one.

Just make a map, find the portal, leave. Simple as that.

Of course, Tommy had to get the materials to do that. And that means he has to leave this hole.

His stomach churned at the thought.

He has to get up. Move across a highly dangerous server. Avoid everybody who clearly *lives* here and knows the server far better than he did. Craft a map. Hope that he's somewhere close to the portal. And get the hell out of here. It didn't matter where he jumps next, he just had to get out of here. Before he's found. Or before the admin teleports to him and eats his brains out.

Tommy warbles at the thought, and then swallows the sound down. Clamping a hand over his mouth.

Stupid chicken sounds. Stupid bird brain. Stupid everything. He shouldn't make stupid baby noises. Wilbur said he sounded like a baby bird and Tommy is *not* a baby. Ever since he manifest in Pogtopia Tommy wished he was human again.

For a hazy moment, Wilbur was his brother again. He held Tommy while he was manifesting. Tending to his every need. He didn't ignore Tommy. He didn't say to shut up. Not once. Tommy remembered wishing he could stay like that for forever, with blood smearing across his shoulders and cramps twisting his insides. As long as Wilbur was with him everything was so much better.

Well, now Wilbur was fucking dead. And he left Tommy anyways. It wouldn't help Tommy wishing for things that could never happen.

He had to find a bolt hole. A place he could hunker down while he could find the materials to get out. The spawn here would be crawling with people. All it would take is one observant person to spy Tommy's name tag while he wasn't crouching and it was over.

Tommy picked up his shovel again and began to dig. He sure as shit wasn't going to go back up. So he might as well go down.

.

Grian was sweating. To say the least. His hands were pulling at his feathers in his hair, as he walked around in a circle. The hermits had gathered, well, most of them. Bdubs and Doc went to go check on spawn.

"Stop pulling on your hair." Scar batted Grian's hands away from his head. "You're going to loose all of them at this rate."

"X is going to kill me." Grian stared off into the distance. "He left for *two seconds* and I already broke the server."

"I was with you, G. You didn't do anything."

"I'm going to have to go into hiding, Scar." Grian warbled, "he won't let me be in charge again for at least three seasons after this."

Scar let out a fond sigh and pulled Grian into a hug.

- Bdubs sleep
- Adults agree to let tommy find his way to them
- They have reputations
- Yeah

So this place is fucking nuts. Tommy hadn't realized how big those buildings were in the distance. He had just picked a random direction and tunneled his way under the ocean until he figured he was far enough away to pull himself back up to the surface.

He would have stayed underground like some type of mole if it wasn't for the fact that his iron pick was low on durability and he lacked a key ingredient to make one.

Wood.

He didn't have a crafting table nor any sticks to make a shitty pick with. He knew he was skating it close when he started to pillar up. He had no idea where he was. He had no mini map. Just hoped he was somewhere he could hit dirt and aim for the closest tree. If he could just get some wood, he could tunnel back down and continue. The further away he was from civilization, the better.

He hit a few tunnels. They were lit with torches, unlike Tommy's tunnel. He would probably cause a sudden influx of mobs to spawn behind him, but Tommy didn't have enough energy to break every piece of stone and replace it afterwards. It felt too cramped and tight, making his anxiety skyrocket.

He hated being underground for long times. Perhaps it had been a sign for what type of hybrid he was going to be. Still, it was sheer luck Tommy hit those tunnels. Otherwise he probably wouldn't have made it to the surface.

He found a way up through various shafts and holes in the stone, up, up, and up. And finally he started to tunnel his way through the rock again, occasionally checking the Y level he was on with a flick of his eyes-

He hit black concrete. At first Tommy thought it was the night sky, but he smacked his head into it when he tried to jump out.

"Mother fuck-"

Ding! You have been pinged for bad language. You have: 3 out of 3 warnings used. Time for warning reset is: 18:32:09. You are now muted for: 18:32:09.

An automated message has appeared: Cleo, I know you tend to swear occasionally. Please remind yourself to keep it PG. Thanks - X.

Tommy opened his mouth to ask, "what the fuck-" but all that came out was a chirp.

He clapped a hand over his mouth. Then he tried to whisper, but soft coo slipped out. Then a sharp, scared squawk filled the air. With a series of hissing chirps and croaks which would

have thoroughly violated the law regarding curse words.

Fucking fucker fucked this damn shitty hell hole. Tommy chittered in his rage. His teeth snapping together with a click. This only fueled his rage. Pushing him to get the hell out of this stupid baby server.

He hit the block above his head, and the concrete snapped into a block form, folding into his inventory.

And Tommy crawled out of the hole, muttering to himself before looking around and *freezing*. This was *not* the middle of nowhere. In fact, it was literally in the middle of a giant ass *city*.

With people around him.

Tommy screeched and crawled backwards. His heart hammering as he skittered to the side of a massive building. The people were all sitting around, on pretty benches that didn't look real and bending down to smell at flowers. A short child held a balloon, their arm raised as the string looked ready to slip out of their wooden fingers-

Wait.

Tommy did a double take. They were-

They were mannequins?

Holy shit. They all looked so real. With painted on faces that looked so fucking realistic. It was in the joints and grooves of their limbs that Tommy could see the wood slotted together. His neck nearly broke as he turned it sharply from side to side, making sure that every humanoid shape was actually fake. And not a monster that was secretly hiding in the background.

Tommy breathed out a shaky curse, but it only came out as a tight whimper. What in the fucking hell. There were creepy mannequins all over. Who in their right mind would ever do this? Some fucking sicko??

His wings pinned tightly to his back. And Tommy curled up, hyperventilating. This place sucked. What kind of weirdo would spend hours painting every single fucking face, positioning the mannequins, and *fucking dressing them up in real clothes??*

Tommy sat there until his heart stopped pounding against his ribs. He kept staring at the statues, wondering if somehow one of them *moved* when he blinked. But... no. They all stayed in the same place.

This was some freaky weird shit.

Tommy finally gathered himself and looked around. The buildings were all massive. Reaching up so high, they could be almost fifty blocks tall. Maybe even higher! It wasn't even close to being the tallest building out there. Tommy spotted the actual skyscraper that rose high into the blue sky, and swallowed hard.

Whoever built that knew they were strong enough nobody would dare to burn it down. That was the last fucking place Tommy ever wanted to be. Tommy stumbled to his feet. He just- he just needed fucking *wood*. Find the nearest log, punch it until it broke, and then he could go back into his hole.

There were a few trees in the distance. What looked to be like some kind of fancy ass park. Tommy kept to the sides of the buildings, studying each and every mannequin he passed. They weren't real. None of them were. The air was silent, with only a slight breeze fluttering the flags attached to the buildings.

It was a picture of a busy street, and yet it was void of any living soul. Besides Tommy. He crossed the street, tucking his arms up to his chest and keeping his wings pinned to his back to look as small as possible. But no monster flew down from the sky. No thunder clapped, no lightning struck, no admin appeared to eat him.

Tommy shuffled up to a tree and pulled back his fist-

Then stopped. Blinking at the wood. Finally taking a moment to stare at it.

It was a fucking wooden post? A fence post?? The kind you keep sheep in? Tommy stared at it, and then looked up at the rest of the tree. It was made up of fucking wooden posts and fence gates. Leaves artfully placed, one by one, to make it look like a stunning tree.

Tommy can't craft *shit* with a fucking oak fencepost.

Tommy clicked angrily, moving to the next tree. But he found that it was the same thing. These weren't *trees* at all. They were fucking... abominations!

He could break the leaves. A sapling could fall from one of them, and Tommy could plant it, wait for it to grow, punch the wood, and then leave.

But trees took fucking ages to grow without bonemeal. It could be literal hours standing out in the open, waiting for that stupid tree to grow. Ugh!

Tommy eyed up the area around him. There were stupid blocks used as decoration that shouldn't be! What the hell? He spotted a bench made up with *carpet*. Pots with leaves placed on top to look like bushes. Even the fucking paths had blocks that shouldn't be there. Tommy bent over to poke at a button.

It clicked.

Nothing happened.

Who the fuck would place buttons-

Oh.

Wilbur did. Pogtopia was drowning in dozens, if not hundreds, of buttons. Put everywhere. Tommy flinched back at the sudden memory. He had forgotten. The last few weeks of Pogtopia was... bad. Wilbur screaming, his voice echoing back. Tommy huddled under his

blankets in his nest, trying to block the sound out. Wishing that Wilbur would calm down. Just for a second-

It didn't work.

Tommy glanced up at the buildings. Now that he noticed the small details, everything seemed to pop out at him. Stone mixed with andesite made a decent looking wall. It wasn't as good as cobblestone, of course. But it was nice. The vines attached to the side looked cool too.

He saw the glint of an enchantment high up on a building. Tommy shivered as he saw a skeleton wander around in the shadow. It wasn't fully lit up properly. And mobs were always willing to jump on a poor souls head to kill them.

Don't stick around the sides of buildings too closely he noted.

Tommy shivered suddenly as a breeze hit him. And he was suddenly aware he was standing out in the open. He should keep moving. Find some wood. Get the fuck out of here. Right! Stick to the plan!

He kept walking. To his amazement, every single building was unique. Whoever built this didn't repeat the same blocks twice. They even made the roofs fancy. Who the hell would do that? Just make it flat like everybody else. Nobody needed fucking stairs on their roof.

Tommy cautiously turned the corner, and suddenly he noticed something that was definitely out of place. Three double chests sat at the side of the road, with dozens of other colorful blocks Tommy had never seen before. He paused, glancing around.

Nobody was here. There weren't even that many mannequins here. Just one or two dotting the street.

He looked left. He glanced right. And he crossed the street towards the chests. It was free loot. He paused before opening one, ducking onto his hands and knees to look under the chest. Tommy knew what an observer looked like under a chest. A thin black line.

But there wasn't one hiding under it. It looked trap free. But that didn't mean shit. There were hundreds of ways to trap a chest.

Still, Tommy didn't think this would be the place to leave a trapped chest. He lifted the latch and pulled open the top. Inside were stacks upon stacks of bricks. Filling up the whole ass chest.

Tommy scowled, closing that one. He didn't need any bricks. He moved to the next one, pulling it open. This one had more odds and ends. Random piles of cobblestone, dirt, and other shit. Tommy didn't need that.

The final one, though. Oh that one had what he needed. A whole stack of dark oak wood. Tommy snatched it and put it in his inventory quickly. There was even *good* shit too. A handful of diamonds, enough to make a pick and a sword! About twenty bars of iron. That

could give him some armor. Tommy pulled them out and pocketed every last bit. Hell, he even took the few pieces of string. He could craft a bow!

Once he pillaged the chest, Tommy snapped it closed and ducked into a close alleyway. Checking on his inventory. Pausing to do some minor management, throwing out the odd piece of diorite and granite.

He grabbed a block of wood, broke it into planks, and made a crafting table. He threw that down and made a pick and a sword, tossing his nearly broken ones onto the ground. He didn't have time, nor the skills, to make particularly good tools. But they lasted. And that's all that mattered.

Now, if Tommy could steal a few enchantments, then he would be absolutely prepared! He made himself a pair of pants and some shoes from the iron, already feeling a bit better with it protecting him. He kept the rest, just in case the rest of his other tools broke.

Tommy popped the crafting table back into his inventory, before backtracking down the street. He should get back to his hole. And he hadn't walked that far. Plus he had a whole ass stack of wood now, he could stay down in the dark for a long time before having to resurface!

His stomach churned. And Tommy forgot he also needed food. Fuck. He passed a building, then paused. Looking down.

There was a random patch of carrots? As like? Decoration? It was made to look like part of the lawn of a fancy town home. Tommy ripped them up, and a dozen carrots appeared in his inventory. Haha! Take that! He was unstoppable!

“-thinking of building a bus station-”

The words hit Tommy like a train. Panic making him jump in surprise and fear. He whirled around, pressing his back up against the side of the building. He was exposed. There was nowhere to run.

Tommy froze as the player glided gracefully down from the sky. Purply wings that glowed with enchantments strapped to his back. A crystal hovered by the netherite armored helmet. The expensive kind of recording crystal, Tommy knew that. Wilbur had talked about how detailed they could record. The cameras on comms was practically nothing in comparison.

The name hovering above the player said *Keralis*.

Tommy didn't know him. But any hermit would be dangerous. And here he was, less than a couple yards from one, exposed.

Kerlais didn't seem to notice Tommy's own player tag above his head. Instead, his back was facing Tommy, the camera pointing to whatever he was looking at. “Every city needs public transformation.” His voice was funny. Light and with a strange accent Tommy had never heard before.

Tommy slowly sank into a couch. His player tag fading away above his head.

Keralis pulled out those bright colorful blocks from his inventory, placing them on the ground. Tommy didn't know what they were. He had kind of ignored the ones on the ground. But a second later he regretted it when he saw the fucker *open it up like it was a chest*.

It spun open, revealing the contents inside. Keralis shuffled a few things around, before gathering all that he needed. "I was thinking about building a double decker bus. A couple around the city, here and there, I also need a fleet of police cars and ambulances. And then..."

Tommy took two steps back. Keeping his footsteps light. Peering down at the ground so he didn't make a noise. But he paused when Keralis grew quiet.

Tommy's head snapped back. His heart growing faster as Keralis bent over and picked something up from the ground.

His shitty iron pickaxe.

"What is this?" Keralis murmured, turning Tommy's pickaxe around in his hand as he inspected it.

Okay, shit. Tommy knew his workmanship was really shitty. It wasn't the nice kind of pickaxe. All of his tools were thrown together. Using the crafting table magic to keep it from falling apart. Tommy had seen Technoblade's tools. He took his time, crafting each sword and axe until the metal flowed seamlessly into the wood handle.

Tommy took one step back. Further into the alleyway. His foot sliding against the stone, and-
Click.

Tommy's foot landed on one of those fucking decorative buttons that was on the ground.

Keralis' head snapped towards him. And oh fucking hell. Oh prime. Oh shitting prime above-

He wasn't human. Tommy hadn't gotten a good look at Keralis' face up until this moment. But the eyes- the fucking *eyes* -

They were going to haunt his dreams.

They were slightly bigger than normal, with tiny black pinprick dots for the pupils. Tommy let out a distressed whistle, stumbling back as he saw his reflection in the other player's eyes.

Predator, whispered some part of his brain. And Tommy could fully agree.

Keralis seemed to be just as shocked as Tommy was. His jaw dropping, revealing sharp teeth. Tommy skittered back, anxious chirps falling from his lips instead of the words he was trying to say. Trying to beg for his life was hard when he was *muted*.

"Oh, you're just a little guy," Keralis said in his strange breathy accent. He dropped the iron pick, holding his hands up in a peaceful gesture. All Tommy could see were the spiked claws at the tip of his fingers.

“Brian didn’t tell me you’d be a little one,” Keralis took a step forwards. Tommy stepped back. His wings pinned to his back in fear. “Shh, it’s okay. I won’t hurt you, lil guy.”

Tommy warbled and took another stumbling step backwards. He tripped, his foot catching on something. And he landed on his ass.

Keralis took several steps closer. Tommy crawled backwards, a series of scared chirps and wheezes escaping. “Shh, shh, it’s okay little one.” Keralis spoke very softly.

Tommy realized with a sudden terror, that the man hadn’t blinked. Not once. His pupils transfixed onto Tommy. Those black pinpricks trained on him.

Like he was the next meal.

Tommy’s wings flared out, flapping wildly. Some instinct saying ‘*be big, and he won’t eat you*’ but it didn’t work. Keralis let out a soft hum, his shadow coming closer. Sliding against the ground until it blotted out the sun.

“Hello little Brian,” Keralis said, still holding his empty palms out. “Did you fall into the server? It’s okay, I’ll help you.”

He was going to fucking kill Tommy.

Something hit the back of Tommy’s spine. He stiffened as cold metal touched his feathers. He barely glanced at it- some giant ass trash can- before snapping back at Keralis. The bigger player was close. So close he could reach out and snatch Tommy’s ankle. Pull him close and rip into his neck.

Tommy let out long scared whine. Pressing his whole body against the metal of the dumpster.

“Shh,” Keralis was bending down. Crouching, until they were almost at the same height. “It’s okay, lil guy. This has to be so scary, I don’t blame you. My name is Keralis, and you’re Tommy, right? Oh, the whole server is going to be so relieved you’re a lil one. We don’t mind children-”

Keralis reached out, and Tommy whimpered, pressing himself tightly into the corner.

He barely caught the glimpse of something green falling down from the building above. A crackling *hiss* that was engraved in his bones to fear. Tommy flinched, even before the creeper hit the ground behind Keralis.

The older player didn’t have time to move before the world lit up in an explosion.

Keralis was blown up by a creeper.

The yellow text in the corner of his eye faded away long before Tommy could *see* again. He blinked the dots in his vision away, his heart hammering in his chest.

How- how was he still alive? That was Tommy's first thought, his hands slapping over his chest and legs. They weren't injured. No blood. No gore. As the crater came into view, there wasn't bits of Keralis flung everywhere. There were dozens of items left on the ground, but there wasn't any sign of a mutilated body.

Tommy bolted. Not even daring to stop to pick up any items on the ground. His worn out shoes slapped against the ground loudly. Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck. Where could Keralis be respawning at? He could be anywhere. Tommy didn't slow down as he passed the numerous mannequins, instead, he went to the once place he knew he could be safe at.

His hole.

The missing block of black concrete was still in his inventory. And he dove for the hole in the street. His new diamond pick slashing through the cobblestone he used to climb up with. He put the concrete block back, before tunneling down. Not even stopping until he hit bedrock.

It had been stupid. Everybody knew not to dig straight down. There could've been lava. Tommy could've lost his last life. But he couldn't muster enough energy to care. His entire body thrumming with energy to *get the hell out of there*.

He tore through stone like it was nothing. Creating tunnels and then doubling back, throwing up andesite behind him to disguise his new trail. He changed direction over a dozen times.

His hunger crept up on him. His energy was low. It began to be a struggle to lift the pickaxe anymore. And finally, in a dark and unlit mineshaft, Tommy slumped to the ground. Pulling out a carrot and gnawing on it.

Tommy checked his hearts, and nearly choked on the vegetable. Four hearts? He had *fucking four hearts*?

Four hearts was the 'cracked ribs, dragging a broken leg on the ground but barely alive' kind of hurt.

Tommy didn't feel like he had been on four hearts at all. Now that he checked, sure he had some minor aches and pains. But to think he had been almost *half dead* this entire time? It made his skin crawl.

He's heard about baby servers before. Wilbur used to joke about living on one when Tommy was younger. Where the admin of the server turned the pain down low, so they barely felt a thing. Tommy was a fucking big man. He didn't need soft kiddy code that made everything feel better. He can handle a bit of blood and grit.

Wilbur always smiled when Tommy said that. Like he was proud of Tommy. Patting him on the head like he had done a good job.

Now that Tommy thought about it, the server must've been turn on the PG setting. There hadn't been a bloody body. No gore. Hell, Tommy wasn't bleeding. He should be crying on the ground in the alleyway still, but instead he was whole and miles away. Graphic violence was removed from the server. Along with his *fucking swear words*.

[17 new messages for TommyInnit]

The words blinked at him. Tommy had ignored it, but he had a few minutes to rest. He needed to wait until his hearts returned before continuing. One skeleton and *poof!* Dead.

It only took a thought for it to appear.

Keralis1 whispered to TommyInnit: Where are you?

Keralis1 whispered to TommyInnit: I promise, I would never hurt you.

Keralis1 whispered to TommyInnit: Can you please tell me your cords so I know you are safe?

Keralis1 whispered to TommyInnit: I am very worried about you. Are you okay? Did the creeper hit you too? I hope I blocked you from the blast.

GoodTimesWithScar whispered to TommyInnit: hello? I'm Scar, its nice to meet you Tommy. Can we talk? I know you've lost your communicator, so my dms are always open.

GoodTimesWithScar whispered to TommyInnit: are you in the city still?

BDoubleO100 whispered to TommyInnit: HELLO TOMMY! I HEARD YOU ARE HAVING A BAD TIME! IF YOU EVER NEED A FRIEND I AM HERE!!

Keralis1 whispered to TommyInnit: sweetie I am so worried can you tell me where you are? It's okay if you don't know your cords. Just describe the building near you.

GoodTimesWithScar whispered to TommyInnit: I have some cookies in my inventory. Are you hungry?

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: hi.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: im an avian too.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: i have a soft nest. if you're tired, you can stay in it.

BDoubleO100 whispered to TommyInnit: I HAVE MANY BEDS IF YOU WOULD LIKE ONE.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: dont listen to bdubs, i have a better nest than those beds he has. have you preened recently?

Renthedog whispered to TommyInnit: whatssup my dude do you like star wars?

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: dont listen to ren either

There were a couple more messages, but Tommy glanced past them. Great. Just fucking *great*. They knew he was here. Well, obviously they knew he was here. But he could have slid

under their radar. But now they knew his face. They called him by his name. They knew what he looked like.

Tommy curled up in a ball. Shivering in the cold tunnel. A low whimper escaping his lips.

He wanted Wilbur here. He'd know what to do.

.

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[Keralis1]: I found our little sweet thing.

[Keralis1]: come to my city please. I met TommyInnit. I have video.

The messages summoned the hermits. Grian had only started on his project when he took to the skies. Around him, the jungle skies were suddenly filled with rockets. Iskall's tree loomed far above every other base, second to Mumbo's.

Grian felt the wind under his feathers, rocket clenched in his hand. It would be faster to go through the nether. But it looked like everybody decided to fly instead. Keralis wasn't too far, just across the ocean and past the shopping district. The massive city appearing on the horizon.

There were dozens of other hermits in the skies as well. Their elytras glinting in the setting sun.

It had been the general consensus that until somebody found the new player, nothing was to be done. Even if they all gathered, they couldn't do anything. Bdubs and Doc said they found a broken communicator, and Tango had yet to say another word about it.

It still hadn't stopped the anxiety and worry settling in Grian's stomach.

He had been in charge.

Xisuma told him he was supposed to look over the server. And within three fucking seconds, it broke.

Truth be told, besides a few old friends, nobody communicated outside of the server. There was a few shipment of modded items that were ordered in, exclaimed by X himself to ensure they were compatible with the code. Some drinks, teas, spices, little things-

So the server shutting itself off wasn't unusual. Perhaps they might miss a few MCC's, but that also wasn't strange. Hermits kept to themselves.

Xisuma wasn't here though. Neither was False. And it made his anxiety flare up. Parts of his flock was missing. And he didn't know if they could get back in. Xisuma could. He could rip apart the seams of the sky and slide in, seamlessly putting everything back.

But that didn't stop Grian from feeling the loss of his flock. There had been a reason why he had seen X and False off, to spend the last few precious seconds with them before they left. He couldn't help but worry. It shouldn't have set in this fast, but the server shouldn't have locked itself.

That never ending itch of '*find flock, find flock!!*' was already becoming unbearable. Next thing Grian knows, he would have picked Scar up and thrown him in his nest. As time would go on, the rest of the hermits would be forcibly thrown in as well. His neighbors would go first, and then as Grain slowly lost sense of himself, running off of his instincts, everybody else would be grabbed on sight.

It shouldn't have set in this fast. But again- the server was locked. Under his supervision.

He banked hard, letting himself fall towards the group of hermits gathered around. Keralis seemed a bit out of sorts. A slight flush of color in his cheeks, and his normally controlled hair was messy and windswept.

"What happened?" Grian landed with a tap of his shoes on the ground.

"Oh Brian!" Keralis was almost flustered, "he was so small. Such a little guy! I can't find him. We need to form search parties-"

"What?"

"Give him a second to see the video, Karlis." XB spoke up, and that couldn't any more ominous if Grian had tried.

"Video?"

"Relax, sweet thing." Keralis held up his communicator, Grian took it. The video was paused, the image of a street from in the air. Grian and the other hermits used recording crystals to share and show off to the others. A way to keep active in the other's lives. Occasionally releasing one that was heavily edited to the servers outside of hermitcraft.

"Bum bah duh bum!" Keralis hummed as Grian hit play. "Hello sweet things, today I'm working on infrastructure! I was thinking of building a bus station."

Keralis landed near a chest monster, pausing to pick up a few items and placing more shulkers on the ground. Adding to the mess. He hummed idly, and Grian looked up from the video.

"Just keep watching," XB said, "you'll see."

Keralis bent over to pick up a stack of slabs, "I was thinking about building a double decker bus. A couple around the city, here and there, I also need a fleet of police cars and ambulances. And then..."

He trailed off. The camera focusing on the odd sight. A few random blocks were discarded like trash on the ground, along with a worn pickaxe and sword. Grian would have recognized

the crafter, the crafting magic working differently for each player. It made tools easy to spot on who made what.

Keralis bent over and picked up the pick. It had been sloppily made, the iron nearly broken into pieces. What looked like threadbare string keeping it together. “What is this?”

There was a noise in the background. The camera turned sharply, and there-

Grian couldn't help the surprised warble that escape him. His wings flaring open, feathers puffing up in shock. A shiver went up his spine, and Grian flinched when the terrified chirp of the-

Nestling . His instincts screamed. *Chick*.

Grian wasn't very good at guessing the age of children. They all seemed to melt together until they became adults, really. But looking at the thin, frightened boy with white and dark blue speckled wings- he couldn't be more than seven. Maybe even six.

He was so *small* .

A baby! Perfect for the nest! Perfect for flock.

Keralis was shocked to see the child too. Hermitcraft was full of adults. The youngest was... well. Do they count the immortals here? Grian couldn't even remember his own age. Let alone the others who might have been walking around eons ago.

Xisuma might be the oldest. But then again, Mumbo could rival him in age.

Keralis crept forwards, the camera catching his palms were empty and up high. The boy- TommyInnit, stumbled backwards. His wings pinned tightly to his back in terror. His bottom lip was trembling- like he was almost about to start crying.

Tommy fell. Tripping over something, his little wings flaring out-

He didn't have flight feathers in yet.

Grian didn't notice his own wings flaring out in a silent greeting, a welcoming gesture to the boy on the screen. Keralis next to him hid a smile behind a hand. XB snickering. The two players watching as Grian's empty, almost pitch black eyes, only grew darker.

The boy only had down feathers. Fluffy little feathers that were supposed to keep him warm instead of flight.

With every panicked chirp, Grian grew tenser. His body coiling up as if to throw himself at the boy. He didn't say a word. Even as Keralis crept closer to the boy on the video. The fine details appearing.

There were scars on TommyInnit's hands. A sprinkle of freckles on his cheeks. But he was pale. Far too pale, as if he had spent the last few months living underground. He was thin too, with more wiry muscle than baby fat.

Nestling needs food.

There were bags under the boys eyes.

Nestling needs sleep.

The boy curled up tightly against the dumpster, staring at Keralis with fearful eyes. Flinching back, he pressed himself into the corner. Baring his throat in a plea for forgiveness.

Keralis was saying something. Bending down. The recording crystal taking in more details and footage. TommyInnit's clothes were shredded and torn, covered in dirt and dust-

Nestling needs warmth .

A hiss of a creeper made Grian lurch forwards. As if he could physically throw himself into the video and cover the boy- *his nestling his boy his chick-* and the screen went black.

It flicked back on in Keralis' hoard. Diamonds glittering and gold surrounding him as he stumbled out of the bed, muttering to himself as he booked it out of his room and down the tower.

Keralis took his communicator from Grian's frozen hands. "See Brian? I went to look for him but he was gone by the time I went back."

Grian was silent, staring at his own palm. He didn't move.

"Grian?"

"I think we broke him."

"Grian! Hey Gman, you in there?" A finger poked him in the cheek. "Come on, I know you can hear us."

"Scar," XB butted in, "maybe that might not be wise."

"It'll be fine." Scar laughed, poking Grian again.

A hand caught Scar's finger. "I will drag you up into the sky and drop you." Grian finally blinked, breaking out of his thoughts.

"Ooh, you're grumpy." Scar laughed, not looking cowed by Grian's threat. It wasn't like it hadn't been a idle threat ever, Grian had done it more than just once. Just for kicks and giggles. As long as both parties were okay with it.

"Where," Grian finally turned to Keralis, a distant, almost dazed look in his black eyes, "was this?"

"Ren's over there trying to smell his trail, sweet Brian." Keralis patted Grian on the shoulder.

The touch made the painful clamor of Grian's instincts calm slightly. He didn't know what to think, how to react, what to *do*-

Nestling!!

He needed to redo his nest. That was the first thing that crossed Grian's mind. He had to remake his nest. Add in more wools and furs. Nestlings tend to get too cold so easily. He should cover up his windows as well. Maybe even add in a fireplace.

He had to make the nest good enough for the chick. Nothing but the best. Hold him down under his wings and calm him and-

"Ren's coming back." Keralis noted, moving away from Grian.

That was illegal.

Grian let out a hiss, dragging Keralis back and folding a wing over him. Pressing him up against his side. He needed his flock *right here*. Moving was simply illegal.

"Brian." Keralis' voice was muffled, but it held nothing but utter fondness.

Scar began to laugh next to Grian. Before he was yanked under Grian's second wing. "Now wait a minute-"

"What'ssup my dudes," Ren landed a few feet away, his auburn wolf ears pricking up. His sunglasses slid down his nose a bit, revealing pale yellow eyes. "Oh is Grian brooding again?"

"I am not brooding!" Grian grumbled, a familiar joke. "I'm just making sure they can't go anywhere."

"Right, so... brooding."

"Yep." Scar agreed under the feathers.

"I'm guessing you saw the video?" Ren continued, "bad news, he tunneled." He scratched behind one of his ears. "Jevin went to go follow the tunnels, see where he might've gone. But I doubt he'll be able to find anything."

Nestling is missing. It made the feathers bristle in anxiety.

"I've sent him a few whispers," Keralis piped up, "I don't know if he's seen them."

Something rubbed the wrong way. Like a hand going against the grain of his feathers. *Keralis* messaged *his* chick? No.

Grian hissed, drawing his wing tighter, pushing Keralis close. "No."

"What? No?" Even Ren looked a bit baffled.

“No!” Grian couldn’t explain it. Words failing him. But it was wrong for Keralis to talk to *his nestling*. Not without Grian to hover nearby and watch over it all.

The hermits had spent years with him, fooling around with him, spending every moment with each other. And that meant they could understand Grian far more than he could at the moment.

Scar began to snicker. “Are you jealous?”

Grian looked bewildered at the thought. Ren and Keralis starting to laugh too. Another player dropped from the sky, and Bdubs join in the laughter as he landed.

“What’s so funny?”

“Grain is jealous Keralis whispered to the kid.” Scar sang out, and Bdubs began to guffaw. Blooming flowers began to float down from the elf.

“It would be a shame…” Scar continued, his eyes sliding to the side. It took Grian a moment to realize what he was doing.

“No!” Grian beat his wings before slapping a hand over Scar’s eyes. But Scar was giggling. It wasn’t like Grian could stop him.

“Too late,” Scar sang, “you know what, Grian? I think my magical village could really use a kid in it. It would really spice things up. All that whimsy, and no pups to play around and explore in it. Just think of him finding my magic crystals!”

The betrayal.

Grian hissed at the very idea.

“Hey now!” Bdubs boomed loudly, “what about me? Huh? Lil guy looks like he could be an epic builder! And I haven’t seen a changeling in so long.” He wiggled his pointed ears, “I wouldn’t mind having him follow me around.”

Grian bristled at the very thought. TommyInnit was *his* nestling. His. And his alone.

“Are we layin’ claim to the pup?” Ren’s tail wagged back and forth, a sharp grin on his face. “Cuz I could give him a nip-”

Grian tilted his head back, “nooooo!” He cried out, “he’s *mine!* ”

“I found him first,” Keralis sang. “You know what they say about finders keepers-”

Scar was giggling, up to something. Grian caught a flash of yellow text reflected in Scar’s eyes- *he was messaging the kid again!*

“Stop it!” Grian slapped a hand back over Scar’s vision. Then he caught Bdubs doing the same thing. “You too!”

“You’re falling behind, G.” Scar giggled, “looks like one of us is going to nab him.”

“Don’t you *dare*.”

“If you don’t think Schwammy isn’t going to steal the kid when he gets back, you’re wrong.” Keralis hummed, “he’s a sucker for kids.”

Grian threw his hands up in the air. “You’re a dragon, Keralis!”

“I know a treasure when I see one.” Keralis winked.

Grian hissed and growled, but he pulled up the internal hud window. All it took was a thought to send a whisper. He much preferred using a communicator, but the kid’s broke.

He paused. Wondering what to even say.

Gotta act cool, Grian. Stay cool. He’s the cool, funny, jokester of the server. Kids love him. TommyInnit would think he’s the coolest person around. Obviously. Gotta act normal.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: hi.

Yeah. That’ll work. Now he had to give Tommy a reason why to message him back. And not the other lunatics on the server.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: im an avian too.

Birds of a feather, flock together. Maybe Tommy needed another avian around. See? Grian already has an advantage over the rest of these fools. Even as Bdubs snickered, obviously sending another message, or as Ren began to stare off into the distance to access his own hud-

Grian was far, far superior than anybody here. And he could prove it!

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: i have a soft nest. if you’re tired, you can stay in it.

And just to punish Scar for doing this, Grian flapped his wings and pulled himself up onto Scar’s shoulder. Almost making the mayor fall over. But Grian perched himself ontop of Scar dozens of times before, and it took only a moment for Scar to adjust.

“If I take the kid, you can’t snatch me *and* him,” Scar said mirthfully, and Grian only hummed, considering the idea.

“You see! I am bribing him with beds!” Bdubs exclaimed. “Did you see how tired he was?”

Grian narrowed his eyes. This time he couldn’t help but add in a question. Very casually. No other reason.

Grian whispered to TommyInnit: dont listen to bdubs, i have a better nest than those beds he has. have you preened recently?

This was a new war. Even as Ren blinked away the yellow text in his eyes, and Grian sent TommyInnit another whisper, a new battle had begun.

It was all fun and games. But Grian could feel how competitive he would be in this. Digging his talons in, ready to get bloody, just for the sweet little nestling to come home with him.

This was something... special. The rest knew it. No doubt, other hermits would join in once they caught wind of it. New things didn't appear often in the hermitcraft server. That's why the hermits often tried to spice things up with new games or builds.

A whole new person. A *kid*, at that. He had never seen their builds. Never experienced their games. It was a fresh new slate. To see the wonder and awe as they took him around the server.

Every hermit wanted attention for their work. And to have somebody new come by? They would snatch them up with their greedy little hands.

But adding a kid into the mix?

It upped the ante.

They were young. *Impressionable*. What hermit didn't want somebody to dote on?

Grian clenched his hands tight, feeling talons digging into his palms. TommyInnit's chirps were still echoing in his ears. His instincts demanded he bring the boy to his nest. To cover him up with his wings and hold him until he stopped crying.

Judging by the way that Scar was messaging on his com, and the way Ren was trying to sneak away, they also felt the instinctual urge as well. Grian wasn't the only hybrid that kept flocks. They needed people just as Grian did. And seeing a kid in distress was one way to immediately latch onto him.

Grian launched himself up into the air, the motion pushing Scar onto the ground. "Better get faster!" Grian called back, as Scar laughed from below. He was gliding in the air, rocket in hand, as he muttered to himself. "Let the games begin."

.

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His head hurt. That hadn't happened in a really long time. And it took him off guard.

"Xi-" The word was faint. Like a distant ocean sweeping over the words, drowning out the symbols.

"-sum-"

Ow.

He tried to open his eyes. And the blinding light increased the pain. They snapped closed, and he felt himself groaning. Thankfully, the pain also brought back some semblance of consciousness.

“-ar me?”

“What?” Xisuma mumbled, forcing one eye open despite the pain.

A shadow above him focused. False was leaning over him, blonde hair falling over her shoulder. A worried crease in her brow. “Xisuma!”

“False?” Xisuma could feel the cold ground beneath him. When did he fall over? Why was he laying on the ground.

“Xisuma, are you okay?” She held a hand out to him, and he took it. Letting her drag him upright. His hands flying up to cradle his helmet, and his poor throbbing head. “You fell down when you came through the portal.”

“I-” That didn’t sound right. But his memory was blurry. He didn’t even recall arriving in the hub. The admin portal was a safe transportation, figuring powerful server owners used it often. But there was something...

“False, was there a kid?” Xisuma asked, lifting his head to scan his surroundings. He was before the portal entrance, the area quiet and barren of other admins.

“A kid?” False looked confused, “no. There is nobody around.”

“Yeah,” Xisuma muttered. “I... I thought I heard a kid crying for help.”

False frowned, “I didn’t hear anything. But I was ahead of you in the portal.”

Xisuma shook his head tenderly, “it must’ve been a void ghost of some kind. Anyways... let’s go see the update.”

False helped him to his feet. She hovered by him, keeping him within arms reach.

“I’m not going to just keel over, False.” Xisuma said, “sometimes portals get some interference. It makes for an unpleasant experience, but I’m fine.” His memory of it was... slippery. But for a second, he had been so *sure* he heard somebody crying.

They walked through the hallowed halls of the admin hub. This place had been built eons ago. Back when textures were basic, and they only had a simple block pallet. It was all made up of stone. With little texture to make the inscriptions on the stone pop.

Xisuma could recall the day this was built. Made up of faceless admins, the few players who found the power to create their own unique worlds. It had been a rare thing to achieve that responsibility back then.

Now, anybody and their pet dog could be an admin. They could have the ‘title’ of admin, but to be able to keep the world intact and whole without glitches- now that was a feat. Even so,

very few admins, the ones with experience and *power* , could come here.

Xisuma extended an invite to False to come and see the update. This was not her first time here, but it was still a solemn and holy place to be in. Their footsteps echoed in the large dark room. Very few torches lit the area. And yet, no mobs spawned.

He could recall the last time he was here. And he learned about the nether update. New lands, biomes, were created. Bastions, new wood types, and a rare metal called netherite. It had blown his mind. Even now, as he flew through the new nether, it made his breath catch.

It was beautiful.

And the universe loved him.

Bless the universe for granting him the beauty of a quiet basalt delta, ash floating down as if a city burned in the distance. It reminded him of a star snuffing out in his mouth. That silent solemn death. The gentle last sizzle of it on his tongue.

They arrived in a quiet room. It only had rows of desks with straight back chairs tucked neatly underneath it. There were dozens of heads bent low over a tome. Xisuma recognized a few faces. But he was wise to not disturb them.

Reading the universes new code was a troublesome task. And interrupting was beyond annoying while trying to decode it.

He paused when he saw a tome of the new update. False stiffening beside him.

It was... *massive*. Larger than any other update he had ever seen before.

“This is going to be a *Big Update*. ” False whispered softly, so not to disturb others.

Xisuma reached up and pulled the front cover off the pages. The letters were in a language long since abandoned. Only using two characters. Ones and zeros.

His fingers trailed across the title page. Parsing the letters together. One by one. And a sharp breath escaped him.

“False, send a message to the hermits.” He said, and she fumbled with her communicator. “We might be here a lot longer than just a month.”

False was tapping away at her comm, “what does it say,” her eyes flicking up. Curiosity *burning* in her eyes.

“It says...” Xisuma traced over the symbols again. “The Caves and Cliffs Update.”

.

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Twelve carrots did not go far. Tommy dug upwards, exhausted. He needed to go find more food. Hell, he could probably grow some more carrots. But he didn't have any bonemeal to quicken the process.

Logically, he could easily find a skeleton. Mobs were everywhere. He could use a dirt block, craft up an easy hoe, find some water- bam.

But the stone above his head felt heavy, the shadow of it inching closer to Tommy. Logically, it would never cave in. The magic of the server didn't allow that to happen. But he had been underground for far too long. And it was starting to grate on his nerves to the point where it was unbearable.

He needed to breathe in the fresh air. Even just for a little bit. For three seconds. And then he could go back down and hide.

Tommy had mined for hours. Doubling back and creating twisting paths. Hiding his real ones and making fake ones. Just like how Wilbur taught him in Pogtopia. Surely he must've traveled thousands of blocks by now! There was no way Tommy was close to any of the Hermits. If he just stayed in an untouched part of the server, than he could make a map and get the hell out of here.

Something started flashing in the corner of his vision. Tommy crouched immediately, pulling open his hud to stare at whatever was making the notification.

His inbox had continued to receive messages. The whispered messages were apart of the hud, but Tommy ignored them. There was now a whopping 54 messages, and they would only climb higher. But that wasn't what gained his attention.

There was a little box, right where his potion effects were listed. A big red x mark across it. When he looked at it, the timer was flashing. **Mute 0:03:21.**

The fucking mute was almost over.

It didn't feel like almost twenty four hours had passed. But then again, time worked differently when mining. What felt like minutes could have been days. Days went by in a couple of hours.

Tommy kept an eye on the timer. Even as he dug upwards. Placing blocks underneath him and repeating the process. He finally hit dirt, which meant he was near the surface when the mute finally wore off.

"Finally," Tommy whispered to himself, the stupid chicken noises gone. He could speak again.

It was really really stupid that he could only make those baby noises when he was muted. Tommy had quite a few words to say about that, but it was only now that he could say it. Instead of speaking the curse words, he viciously thought them instead. He wasn't ready to get muted again so quickly.

His shovel ate through the dirt, and finally-

There was air above him. No more blocks. Just sweet, sweet... stale air. The low flicker of a torch light made Tommy crouch again. This wasn't abandoned territory. Fuck. He listened quietly, but he didn't hear anything. Just the faint pop of a torch spitting.

Slowly Tommy peered over the edge. Reaching up to touch the block of dirt and shove himself out of the hole-

Slimy sticky grass clung to his hands, and Tommy recoiled. "What the *fuck*-?"

Ding! You have been pinged for bad language. You have: 1 out of 3 warnings used. Time for warning reset is: 23:59:58.

"Goddam-" Tommy stopped himself before he finished it, grimacing and shaking his fist angrily at the big man in the sky. Both of his palms were sticky from whatever he touched. Instead of climbing out of the stupid hole, Tommy just placed blocks. It was noisier, but fuck that. It was *gross*.

There were cobwebs covering the corners. A table was placed in the middle of the dark room, a wooden creaking roof above Tommy's head. There was a large wall with signs on it, the writing aged and discolored from disuse.

Wherever Tommy was, this place was long since abandoned. He heard the sound of water nearby, and the roof above creaked occasionally. Was he under... a ship of some kind? Tommy took a step, and his foot landed in the slimy block. He recoiled, holding his foot up.

Now he could get a good look at the gross block. It was made up of dirt, like a grass block. But the top was... purple and nearly covered by dozens, if not hundreds, of mushrooms. "Mycelium?" Tommy whispered with disgust.

Gross.

Tommy grimaced as he glanced around. The room was dusty and clearly abandoned. But who the fuck wanted to step on mushrooms and sticky dirt? Admittedly, this mycelium was overgrown, making it worse than the normal kind.

Tommy stepped out into the mushrooms. Feeling them crush under his feet. This place hadn't been touched in a long time. And that meant nobody would care if Tommy looted it for anything.

He didn't find anything interesting. No chests, it was just a couple of torches, cobwebs, a empty table, and the signs. Tommy plucked one of the torches from the wall to use it to read the faded words.

Tommy reached out and touched the letters and read, '*I've heard that Mumbo Jumbo is the Leader of the Mycelium Resistance.*'

The hermits had a resistance too?

Tommy looked around the room in a new light. It *did* remind him of Pogtopia. Was this their mushroom base? Before they had to leave.

“This place isn’t half bad,” Tommy begrudgingly admitted, “if there is a resistance that means there has to be some *good* hermits, right?”

Wilbur said that only good people resisted. After Schlatt banished them from L’Manburg, Wilbur said that they were *good* people. And that they had to take back what Schlatt took from them. Schlatt wouldn’t be good to the people of L’Manburg. He would abuse them and hurt them all the time. That’s why Wilbur had to take their country back. He would save everybody.

At least, that’s what Wilbur said. Tommy didn’t know if that was true anymore. What with his brother being dead, and L’Manburg blasted into ruins.

Mumbo Jumbo... Tommy will remember that name. If the guy wasn’t dead already from the hermits, then he could be an ally. Maybe he needed somebody to help him. Resist. And shit.

Tommy explored the rest of the small room. There was a painting, and he lifted up the edge and found a hole behind it. The way out. He smiled, slipping through the secret passage. The torch in his hand sizzled and popped with the server magic, and then Tommy hit a trap door. Water splashing up through the gaps of wood.

Great.

Tommy didn’t mind getting wet. That was before two wings popped out of his back. Those motherfuckers decided to soak in as much water they could. It was such a pain to get it dry. He put the torch on the wall and jumped into the water without much hesitation.

There was a path to swim down, and sunlight- bright warm sunlight- finally hit Tommy. His head popped up to the surface, and he took a look around. Completely bewildered.

This was so *not* abandoned.

A massive building floated on the raft on the water, made up of wood and glass. It stretched up high into the sky. Tommy had been underneath it. But that wasn’t the only thing. There was dozens of other buildings. All of them vastly different. One made up of three rockets, another looked like a trident, on a hill nearby Tommy saw a giant building that looked like a chest eating blocks!

“Poggers,” the word slipped out of his mouth in awe.

Something glinted in the trees. Holy shit, were those *diamonds*? Tommy pulled himself out of the water, his wings dragging heavily behind him. Yeah... those were fucking *diamonds* in the trees.

The streets were decorated and lined with bushes and flowers. And even those looked beautiful.

“Where... am I?” Tommy whispered. And then he caught two familiar towers in the far distance. The same two towers he looked at when he first arrived on the server. He wasn’t very far from spawn at all.

“Oh you mother *fucker*.”

Ding! You have been pinged for bad language.

.

Tommy stole the diamonds from the trees. Obviously. Who would leave them there? It was practically asking for it to be stolen. There was a huge building ontop of a hill. It looked somewhat similar to the white house they built in L’Manburg. Where important people tend to spend their time in.

He’ll check it out later. For now, Tommy wanted to *loot*.

He went into the giant building made up of spruce wood and glass. There were *tons* of chests. It was looting heaven!

Tommy’s eyes caught on a sign, ‘*nametags, 16 for one diamond*’ and it clicked. This was a shop. He opened a few chests, and sure enough- there was tons of materials. Bricks, pots, sand, gravel... all of them had a price attached to it. And holy fuck there was a lot of diamonds in the chests too. This shop was booming.

Tommy thumbed the diamonds he stole from the trees in his inventory. It would be more suspicious if stock went missing, right? He was going to just steal it all anyways. But it would be sneakier if he just used the diamonds he had. Who would know they were stolen diamonds if they were mixed in with the rest?

There was a barrel full to the brim of golden carrots. Food that would last Tommy a long time. The sign said ‘*one diamond for three stacks*’ and it was a steal of a price. He tossed out a couple of garbage items in his inventory, before he noticed the ender chest sitting in the middle of the room.

Tommy put in two diamonds into the barrel and retrieved six stacks of carrots. This would last him *forever*. At least until he could leave the server. He most of them in the ender chest. He could probably steal one later.

It was when he was reaching into the ender chest to place items when his eye caught a flash of gray on his arm. Tommy’s breath caught in fear. At first he thought all of the hearts were empty-

But the color was sapped from them. The three hearts that signified his lives were grayed out. Two were empty, only a faint outline of the heart left. His last heart was full. He was on his last life.

He had seen this before. When Wilbur and Tommy had visited Hypixel that one time. Their hearts had grayed out. Of course, that meant they had infinite lives. Tommy had found it

hilarious to jump off Hypixel's islands over and over, respawning until Wilbur grabbed him and told him not to do it anymore.

Tommy stared at it for a long moment. It didn't click.

And then it hit him like a sledge hammer. He didn't- he didn't have *one* life anymore. He didn't have to live on the edge, fearing for the moment he would run out of hearts. He didn't have to walk carefully at night, scared that a single arrow could end things. He didn't have to be *scared*.

- battle of the dads. hermit vs hermit.

- Mumbo is living under his rock (aka temple)

- he's an eldritch being but who really cares about that lol

- everybody on the server are trying to pspspsing tommy out of hiding who is hissing and digging under their streets and hiding in their chest monsters

- grian especially wants little boi. HES GOT WIINGGSS. ITS UNFAIR. NOBODY ELSE IS ALLOWED TO HAVE A SON.

- tommy: this lanky mother fucker is cool i like him. plus he's a leader of a *resistance*. very important.

- cue: Tommy following around the one hermit who doesn't even know what is going on. Mumbo. Who is in the middle of red stone that he's like "ah, a new hermit? Okay."

- Tommy regularly throws food and makes Mumbo eat. Mumbo doesn't need to eat. Mumbo is an eldritch being. He eats. Because Tommy looks up at him and is tapping his toes and refuses to leave until Mumbo is eating the baked potato.

- Tommy is silenced/muted because guess what guys. he can't. stop. swearing. lol

- X is reading up about caves and cliffs update (remember when that was HUGE. maaann. im old.)

- Scar the mayor is Number One Enemy (to tommy)

- X comes back home (i cant recall what brings him back idk it's been years since ive thought of this au) and the hermit server is locked down so he sets things right as the mod and everybody is clamoring at him to bring them the boy. give him the boy X. Grian has been so good. He wants the BOOOY.

- Mumbo and Tommy are vibing :) :) nothing is happening :) :) Mumbo really likes the kid. :) and Tommy likes him back :)

- X TP's Tommy to the meeting hall full of the Hermits. and Tommy is, you know, scared for his life bc everybody is a type of monster of some kind

- Tommy screams and Mumbo comes fucking BURSTING INTO THE ROOM SPOOKILY BECAUSE GUESS WHAT GUYS HE'S AN ELDTRICH BEING WOOOOAAHHHH (nobody could have foreseen this coming)
- Mumbo snatching Tommy up who is chirping for his flock, and he's scary until he's awkward and realizes everybody is staring at him and he's like 'haha hey guys whats up.'
- Grian sobbing melodramatically in the background about losing the avian chick. (Tommy and him become friends and later accomplices in crime ect ect ect they all live happily ever after :) theee ennddd)

Chapter End Notes

i gave up on this au when i realized i had to write so many characters from different pov's. lol

End Notes

If you want to create something from my fics, I genuinely ask you to please credit me. It hurts to see people steal things. And I would like to show you all the other works that are unfinished. If I see a lot of people doing it- I'm taking this scrap bin down. No hesitation.

No, anything I place on this fic is something I will never work on again. Please don't ask me to 'continue' an idea.

Also don't throw head cannons/ideas in the comments. Make your own fic, darling. You are strong enough. I believe in you.

Works inspired by this one

[An Exchange of Names](#) by [Starling12](#)

[Restricted Work] by [Lilyofthegrave](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!